The Thesis Committee for Lewis Fallis
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

Political Ambition and Piety in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*

APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Supervisor:

Thomas L. Pangle

Lorraine Pangle

Devin Stauffer

Political Ambition and Piety
in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*

by

Lewis Fallis, B.A.

Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2013

Abstract

Political Ambition and Piety in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*

Lewis Fallis, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2013

Supervisor: Thomas L. Pangle

This thesis analyzes Books III and IV of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. The *Memorabilia* is Xenophon's defense of Socrates or the philosophic life against Athens or the political community as such. In Book III, Xenophon presents six portraits of ambitious young men. These portraits, read closely, unveil the psychological nature of ambition and convey important lessons about the Socratic understanding of healthy politics, as a realm that is necessarily pious. Book IV's four Socratic conversations with a dim-witted youth named Euthydemus both underscore the lessons of Book III and explore piety itself, as a phenomenon that is necessarily political. These sections of the *Memorabilia* may thus be read as an argument for the necessity of a fissure between healthy politics and philosophy – and as a bridge from the one to the other.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction 1

Chapter 2: Book III……...3

The Initial Socratic Perspective on Rule (3.1) 5

Rule as Self-Sacrifice (3.2)……12

Rule as Exploitation (3.3)……..18

Rule as Household Management (3.4)……..25

Rule as Mutual Erotic Devotion (3.5)……32

Rule as Erotic Devotion to a Vision of Oneself (3.6)……42

Rule as Friendship (3.7)……47

Book III: Xenophon's Typology of Rule……51

Chapter 3: Book IV…….….53

Three (or Four?) Natures of Young Men (4.1)……53

Justice (4.2).....……...57

The Reconstruction of Piety (4.3)…….……....79

Justice as Lawfulness (4.4)…….…….….87

Continence (4.5)..…….…….……99

Lawfulness (4.6)...……..104

Conclusion: Religion and Politics Through Socrates' Eyes……..……..115

References……117

Chapter 1:

Introduction

For the modern West, the relationship between religion and politics has become practically and theoretically problematic.[1] Liberalism itself, with its commitments to pluralism and religious toleration, has come to seem a form of groundless faith.[2] Modern liberals seek, with great angst and contortion, to accommodate religious outlooks that seek to eradicate modern liberalism.[3] Icons of irreligion come to doubt the possibility of a society not grounded in faith.[4]

To obtain a new perspective on this problem coeval with man, we must turn to an old perspective. The understanding of the Ancient Greeks, foreign to that of Enlightenment modernity, may solve or at least clarify our puzzles. We turn to Socrates as the apparent founder of political philosophy.[5] For frankness regarding the problem of

---

1 Cf. Rawls, John. *Political Liberalism*.
2 Owen, Judd. *Religion and the Demise of Liberal Rationalism* pg. 2-5, pg. 142-146.
3 Cf. Qutb, Sayyid. *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq.*
4 Cf. Rorty & Vattimo. *The Future of Religion.*
5 Strauss, Leo. *Natural Right and History* pg. 120.

religion and politics, we turn not to Plato but to Xenophon, given that Plato himself may have been engaged in the construction of a new religion.[6] Through the depiction of Socratic conversations with seven ambitious young men in Books III and IV of his *Memorabilia*, Xenophon clarifies the essential and enduring necessities of politics, religion, and the relation between the two.

6 Cf. Plato, *Republic* 508d-509c with 506e-507a, and 614b-621d.

Chapter 2: Book III

The *Memorabilia* is Xenophon's defense of Socrates or the philosophic life against Athens or the political community. Athens, of course, executed Socrates for not believing in the gods of the city and for corrupting the young. The *Memorabilia* as a whole, then, is implicitly concerned with political life and religion. But the former is not explicitly investigated until Book III, nor the latter until Book IV. Books I and II defend Socrates against the charges on which he was executed (I.1-I.2), and then show how he – far from being unjust – was in fact a constant benefactor of his companions (I.3-II.1), family members (II.2), and friends or comrades (II.3-II.10). But with Book III, we turn to politics.

Xenophon begins Book III with a promise to describe the fact that Socrates "benefited those who yearned for noble things by making them attentive to/careful about what they yearned for" (III.1.1). Book III as a whole contains fourteen chapters: seven chapters on political ambition; one chapter on what is noble and what is good; one chapter on courage, wisdom, madness, envy, leisure, and rule; one chapter on artists and artisans; one chapter on *eros* and philosophy; one chapter on bodily health; one chapter on indignation; and a final chapter on feasting. The first half of Book III depicts the

Socratic investigation into political ambition understood as a yearning for noble things. Six distinct models of rule are presented; the first chapter serves as an introduction.

The Initial Socratic Perspective on Rule (3.1)

Chapter One presents Socrates' advice to a young man aspiring to the honor or office (τιμῆ) of general. Socrates castigates this companion for neglecting an education in the art from which he seeks honor; he persuades him to seek instruction in generalship from the sophist Dionysodorus. But upon the companion's return, Socrates mocks him and criticizes the instruction he received. After a brief attempt to supplement the incomplete education, Socrates sends the companion back to the teacher he considers incompetent.

Chapter One raises several crucial questions which will recur in different forms throughout Book III. The Socratic attitude toward politics, at least in this initial presentation, appears somewhat flippant, amoral, and debunking.

Socratic Flippancy

Throughout this first chapter, Socrates displays a lighthearted attitude toward ambition, and toward politics itself. The initial effort to send the young companion to Dionysodorus – if Plato's presentation of Dionysodorus is to be trusted (cf. *Euthydemus*) – was itself an act of flippancy, especially given Socrates' own evident competence as a teacher of aspiring generals. Why did Socrates not teach the youth himself? The decision

to send the youth *back* to Dionysodorus, after Dionysodorus had proven his inferiority as a teacher, is even stranger. Most striking of all, however, is the Socratic joke that, upon learning how to be a general, the youth already appears "more majestic" than before, and is in fact *already* a general (III.1.4).

When joking, Socrates "was no less profitable to those who spent time with him than when he was serious" (IV.1.1, cf. I.3.8). Accordingly, this Socratic joke has a playful side but also several serious points. On the one hand, the statement is obviously absurd: being a general requires actually receiving the office of general and exercising its power. One does not earn the title of general simply by learning the art of generalship. On the other hand, the statement expands upon a common or universal intuition about generalship or rule, reflects the hopes of Socrates' companion, and points to an important question about rule.

Socrates claims that, just as one who understands medicine need not actually practice medicine to be a doctor, so the one who understands generalship is a general, with or without being elected to the office. This claim is rooted in the common or universal intuition that knowledge of generalship (or rule), as the virtue of a general, is essential to one's deserving the name general (or ruler). But Socrates expands upon this intuition about the definition of a general: *only* knowledge matters. Election and, by implication, other forms of consent by the governed, as well as the rule of law itself, become, according to this line of thought, completely immaterial. In Chapter 10 of Book III, Socrates repeats and elaborates on this idea that knowledge alone provides a legitimate claim to rule (III.10.10-11). That elaboration, of course, is immediately followed by an objection regarding the dangers of tyranny. Socrates there counters

lamely with a discussion of the natural consequences of tyrannical imprudence (III.10.12-13); he seems to remain staunchly convinced that rule, however lawless or non-consensual – however tyrannical – is legitimized by understanding alone. Is this the ultimate Socratic position? We will see in Chapter Four of Book IV—a chapter in which Socrates defines the just as the lawful—that it is not. But the reasons behind the eventual re-embrace of law and consent (cf. IV.6.12) will be complex.

Socrates' joke also serves to illuminate, through exaggeration, the hopes of his young and ambitious companion. To understand the twofold hope implicit in Socrates' parody, it will be useful to divide the motives for desiring virtue—especially for desiring *ruling* virtue, as displayed by the ambitious young men in Book III—into four categories. One might desire virtue: (i) simply to have the virtue, i.e. to be virtuous, (ii) to exercise the virtue, i.e. for the personal enjoyment of putting it into action, (iii) as a means, in order to benefit the city or other people, or (iv) as a means, in order to reap eventual benefits for oneself (e.g. honor and wealth). One might abbreviate these four motives to virtue as (i) having or being, (ii) exercising, (iii) benefiting, and (iv) self-benefiting.

According to Socrates' joke, the companion, simply by acquiring the art of generalship, already "appears more majestic" (III.1.4). Socrates here parodies the young man's hope that he would, through the possession of virtue alone, experience a great change in his condition (motive one) – to such an extent that his newfound virtue would be immediately recognizable from his appearance alone. Great honor, then, would almost *necessarily* accrue to him. Socrates seems to parody the youth's confidence that simply having virtue will be sufficient for accruing great rewards (motive four).

The companion seems to have hoped also that virtue would be its own reward, or rather that possessing the virtue of generalship would be good in itself. And yet, to judge from his continuing efforts to seek office, one might be inclined to think that he viewed his newfound virtue not primarily as an end in itself, but as a means. Socrates says that the youth's knowledge of generalship has not only made him more majestic but has already transformed him fully into a general (in the only meaningful sense of the word). By stressing the possession of the virtue alone, independent of its exercise, effects, or honors, Socrates seems to turn his companion's attention more fully toward the first motive for virtue. In other words, by claiming that *being* a general requires only that one *have* the virtue of a general, even without exercising it, Socrates claims that merely having the virtue is good in itself, the only good (or aspect of generalship) worth mentioning.

But this observation brings us to a troubling question. Socrates himself, given the knowledge he here displays, seems to possess the virtue of a general. And yet he does not exercise or even attempt to exercise that virtue (Strauss, *Xenophon's Socrates* 57-58). He seems to lack a sufficient motive to put his virtue into action, or to bring about its effects.

"What is most important" in the various arts, Xenophon had earlier claimed, is whether the exercise of the art will be advantageous to the knower of the art (I.1.8). He had then listed three pairs of uncertain human beings; in the central pair, the skilled general was revealed to be uncertain "whether to lead the army is to his advantage; nor to the skilled statesman is it clear whether to preside over the city is to his advantage" (I.1.8). These things are only clear to the gods (I.1.8); "those who think there is nothing divine in matters of this sort" are crazy (I.1.9).

Knowledge of the art of generalship (that is, the virtue of a general) then, must include knowledge of whether or not being a general is good. Yet Socrates, though he knows the art and has the virtue, seems to make no attempt to exercise it. Does this mean that the true knower of generalship answers the "most important" question, the question of whether being a general is good, in the negative? Would the same logic apply, more broadly, to ruling? But if knowledge is the only legitimate claim to rule, and knowledge of the ruling art necessarily includes the knowledge that ruling is unchoiceworthy, how will legitimate rule ever come into being? And what does it mean to say that only the gods know whether rule is choiceworthy or not, or that there is necessarily something divine involved in these questions? Perhaps this points merely to human beings' vulnerability to chance and to the gods' knowledge of the future, but perhaps it points to something more fundamental. We are left pondering, then, this basic question: Is ruling good for the ruler, and if so, under what conditions?

Socratic Amorality

Secondly, the initial Socratic perspective on politics seems to be extremely realist, even amoral, when it comes to war. A general should be "fit to contrive…shrewd, both friendly and savage/cruel (ὠμός), both straightforward and devious, both fit to guard and thievish, lavish, rapacious, fond of giving, greedy" (III.1.6). This advice is echoed by the Socratic father of Cyrus[7] in Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus* (I.6.27). The general, then, would seem to be above or outside of the law or code of justice of his city. Is the general or ruler a part of his own city, or does he somehow transcend it? Does Socrates consider

[7] Although the name Cambyses is never mentioned in that chapter; cf. *Edu. Cyrus* I.2.1.

the realm of international relations trans-moral? Is its only standard prudence? What is the meaning or status of justice if it applies only *within* a city?

Socratic Debunking

Thirdly, the initial Socratic perspective seems to involve a great deal of debunking. Socrates' young companion was not taught how to distinguish good from bad soldiers. He wishes Socrates to examine this with him (III.1.10). Socrates immediately analogizes the soldiers' love of honor to a gang of robbers' love of money. Robbers take risks for money; soldiers take risks for praise. The analogy presents courage through an offensively reductionist and amoral lens; the love of honor is merely another form of the desire for gain. Because the ambitious ones, who love honor or praise, are "highly visible everywhere," it will be easy to select them (III.1.10) and put them on the front lines. But this statement raises a further question: is not the young companion himself an ambitious lover of honor? We see then, how the art of rule might eventually turn upon itself. That is, through learning how to motivate or even to exploit, a ruler might come to wonder at his own motives, and to investigate whether he himself was merely an exploiter or in some sense also exploited.

This characterization of honor as a payment thus points us back to the fourfold desire for the ruling virtue, and to the question of the goodness of rule. One might claim that simply possessing the ruling virtue is choiceworthy in its own right. But those who desire the ruling virtue also seem to desire a reward – at least the reward of office (τιμῆ), understood as an opportunity to put their virtue into action (motive two). Or is the

exercise of the ruling virtue *itself* a sacrifice? This would seem to be indicated by the great desire for honor (τιμῆ) as a recompense for the activity of rule (motive four). If *having* a ruler's virtue and *exercising* the virtue of a ruler were good in themselves, why would honor be necessary? But if the exercise of the virtue were *bad* for the ruler, why would the office itself be seen as an honor and a reward?[8] Citizens and leaders seem to see rule as, on the whole, *both* intrinsically appealing *and* as a noble service or sacrifice deserving of recompense in the form of honor. But can it be both?

The Investigation into Ambition

The Socratic investigation of ambition that follows in the next six chapters of the *Memorabilia* delves into whether, in what ways, or under what conditions ruling is good or bad for a ruler. Socrates' ostensibly flippant, amoral, and debunking starting point is thus highly provisional. That perspective, the perspective of a detached philosophic observer of politics, raises far more questions than it answers, and must in fact be set aside in favor of a careful, attentive, and immersive inquiry into the actual thoughts and desires of ambitious men themselves. This inquiry takes place over the next six chapters, which present six different models of rule.

[8] As is indicated by the fact that "office" and "honor" share the same Greek word.

Rule as Self-Sacrifice (3.2)

Chapter Two consists of Socrates' "dialogue" with a recently elected general; the focus here shifts from possessing to exercising the virtue of a ruler. Socrates presents a series of questions, explanations, and exhortations regarding the virtue of a general and a king; the "interlocutor" remains speechless throughout.

In this chapter Socrates seems to present a model of rule as entirely self-sacrificial. Xenophon summarizes the chapter in its final sentence: "by examining in this way what the virtue of a good leader is, he stripped away the rest but left the making of whomever he leads happy" (III.2.4). The general must attend, like a good shepherd, to his ewes. A king, likewise, is elected "not in order to attend to himself nobly," but in order to furnish "the best possible life" to those whom he leads (III.2.3-4). Leadership is understood as public service, as noble self-sacrifice.

But upon closer examination, the picture becomes more complicated. For whom, exactly, is the sacrifice made? Whose interest does the ruler's service serve? *Does* the ruler understand his activity as a sacrifice? The chapter proceeds dialectically and must be examined step-by-step.

The Character of Sacrificial Rule

Socrates begins the chapter with a question. Why, he asks the general, did Homer call Agamemnon "shepherd of the people/the men (λαοί)"? According to Socrates' explanation, Homer meant by this that Agamemnon was the shepherd of the soldiers. Didn't Homer use this phrase, Socrates asks, "because, just as shepherds should attend to it that the ewes will be safe and have their provisions and that the purpose for which they are sustained will be achieved, so also the general must attend to it that the soldiers will be safe and have their provisions so that the purpose for which they go on campaign will be achieved? And they go on campaign so that through overpowering their enemies they'll be happier." (III.2.1). But this claim raises as many difficulties as it solves. First and most obviously, is it really true that leaders seek primarily to provide for the safety and happiness of their soldiers, as if they were fragile ewes? Or doesn't a good leader primarily focus on—and doesn't even the soldiers' dignity consist in being directed toward—achieving "the purpose for which [the soldiers] are sustained," namely winning the war? Mustn't the leader afford safety and provisions to the soldiers only insofar as that is more useful than putting them at risk? Aren't the soldiers, then, not like ewes but like the dogs that protect them?

The general could have taken the opportunity here to correct Socrates' interpretation of Homer: Agamemnon was called "shepherd of the people/the men" *not* because he protected and provided for the soldiers like needy ewes, but because he nobly protected the people of the city; *they* were the ewes who needed protection. Why did the general decline to make this correction?

Had the general reinterpreted Homer in this way, several problems would have emerged. If the people back home are the ewes, what place do the soldiers occupy? Are they like dogs, *used* by the leader (the shepherd) and the people (the ewes)? But this would be a grim picture. No general would like to think of himself as merely exploiting the soldiers for the people's gain. This mentality is not only heartless but also presents a clear violation of justice: if the soldiers are supremely virtuous in their protective activity, then the more virtuous are being sacrificed for the sake of the less; the high are serving the low. But is it not a demand of justice that the best receive what is best? An additional problem is posed by the shepherd analogy itself. Do shepherds truly protect and provide for their flock for the sake of the ewes? Or is not the shepherd's effort made, in the end, for the sake of fleece and lamb chops? In other words, is the leader in truth serving his *own* interest and only exploiting the people? Two of the final chapters of Book II had introduced the analogy of sheep and the dogs who protect them. Socrates' associate Crito had explained why he employed the dogs that kept wolves away from his flocks: "For it *profits me* more to sustain them than not" (II.9.2). Is this the secret mentality of the leader? Does he seek his own gain, exploiting the soldiers (cf. *Edu. Cyrus* V.3.47) in order to protect the people, whom he fleeces?

A sudden shift occurs after Socrates' question in line one, which may also help to explain the general's failure to answer and correct Socrates' interpretation of Homer. In the same way that "shepherds should attend to it that the ewes will be safe and have their provisions and that the purpose for which they are sustained will be achieved, so also the general must attend to it that the soldiers will be safe and have their provisions so that the purpose for which they go on campaign will be achieved? *And they go on campaign so*

that through overpowering their enemies they'll be happier." (III.2.1). Suddenly Socrates describes the *soldiers'* purpose in going on campaign. But is this purpose identical with "the purpose for which they are sustained"? Or is there not a fundamental tension between the purpose of the leader, who seeks mainly to win the war, and the purpose of his soldiers, who apparently see their involvement in the campaign as a means to their own happiness? The general, then, would seem to be fundamentally separate from, or above, the soldiers; and yet neither would he want to say that he does *not* care about their happiness. Certainly the soldiers themselves must be, in an important sense, dearest to the general's heart.

Accordingly, the next section shifts abruptly to a fundamental harmony of interest between the general and his soldiers, and between a king and his subjects. The general contends well himself and also (καί) causes his soldiers to contend well. The king presides nobly over his own life and also (καί) causes happiness for his subjects. No tension of interest appears, at first glance. But there is perhaps a tension between the interest of the general and his soldiers, on the one hand, and the king and his subjects, on the other. In addition, the primary concern of the leader as leader is left unclear. Does he seek to serve only the interest of others, or does he seek their interest in conjunction with his own? Repeatedly, Socrates' strange phrasing suggests that the virtue of a leader does *not* consist in taking care of his own virtue or happiness, but *also* in taking care of the virtue or happiness of others. In other words, Socrates renders it repeatedly ambiguous whether attending to his *own* virtue is extrinsic to (or even disallowed by) the virtue of a leader, or *included* in that virtue.

The next section, despite promising an explanation, presents only a more confused jumble than before. The strange phrasing continues: "For indeed the king is elected *not* in order to attend to himself nobly, but *also* (καί) so that those who elected him will do well because of him" (III.2.3). Once again, the first and second clauses contradict each other, and implicitly *equate* self-sacrifice (by the ruler for the ruled) with a harmony of interest (between the ruler and the ruled). The ruler sacrifices; but somehow it is precisely *in* that sacrifice that his interest, along with that of the ruled, is served. The electors, then, seem to share the king's jumbled mentality. Precisely in his self-forgetting sacrifice, he hopes to serve his own interest. The virtue of a ruler, then, is: self-sacrificially to serve his own interest.

Next, Socrates claims that, "All go on campaign in order to have the best possible life, and for this purpose they elect generals, so that they will be their leaders for this" (III.2.3). "All," presumably even the general himself, go on campaign out of self-interest, and for this purpose "they"—suddenly the general is not included—elect generals. "So the one who is general should furnish this to those who elected him general" (III.2.3)—but apparently not to himself. Of course, if the best possible life is the most virtuous life, i.e. the life of rule, then the ruled, by definition, can never be furnished with the best possible life, no matter how noble their benefactor. Socrates calls it the "virtue of a good leader" to make others happy. But isn't virtue a good, or even the greatest possession? If so, it would seem that the leader attains the best possible life for himself by becoming the greatest benefactor. But this would no longer be self-sacrificial. And how could he make others happy in the truest sense if true happiness means being the greatest benefactor, rather than the recipient of benefits from others? Alternatively, if the best possible life *is*

something that can be given to the ruled by a ruler, then it would seem that even as the ruler's *task* became more coherent, his *motivation* for that task might wither. His true interest would lie not in benefiting but in becoming ruled by a benefactor.

Socrates continues. To rule as a self-forgetting and self-sacrificial benefactor, who simultaneously serves his own interest, is noble: "in fact it's not easy to find anything else more noble than this or more shameful than its opposite" (III.2.4). And yet the virtue of a good leader has come to light as, in a sense, its own opposite.

The puzzle of the ruler's own good has only intensified in this chapter. It would seem, according to this presentation, difficult or impossible for a human being to find choiceworthy a model of rule as *purely* self-sacrificial, as *purely* bad for himself. Even the attempt to articulate such a model as choiceworthy tends to lapse into self-contradiction.

Rule as Exploitation (3.3)

In Chapter Three, Socrates converses with a young and recently elected cavalry commander. The man's youth enables Socrates to ask, as he had not asked the general in the previous chapter, *why* he desired military office. Without waiting for a response, Socrates takes the time to rebut his own (and apparently ludicrous) suggestion that the youth's ambition might stem from the desire for a different physical location as he rode his horse. In fact it is the bowmen who are thought deserving or worthy of this position (III.3.1). Their desert or worthiness to ride first presumably stems from the utility, for the war effort, of their occupying that position. The ambitious young man would seem to seek a different kind of worthiness, one not so strictly dependent on utility for the war effort. Or is it different? What is the connection between worthiness or justice, and utility?

Socrates then suggests and rebuts a second suggestion: neither did the young man seek military office for the sake of being recognized or perceived by others: "for madmen/those in a rage too are recognized by all" (III.3.1). It is possible that Socrates see a connection between madness and the love of honor; he seems here to point to something simpler. The desire for office or honor must be a desire for recognition of

one's *virtue*. But this too raises a question. Which is more important to the cavalry commander: possessing virtue, or having it recognized?

The questions suggested by these initial remarks are quickly pushed aside, as Socrates suggests to the youth that his primary motive must be benefitting the city (motive three). Emphatically, the youth agrees. It is indeed noble, Socrates remarks – *if* the youth is able to benefit the city. Merely to possess and to exercise virtue is not noble. Only the *successful use* of virtue as a means to bring about actual benefits for the city is noble (motive three).[9] This chapter would seem to abstract from every concern except the city's benefit.

The youth is to rule over both horses and riders. He must attend to the horses himself, if the cavalry is to be of any benefit to *him* (III.3.4). Suddenly the focus shifts away from the city's benefit and toward that of the commander himself. But after Socrates' description of the potential deficiencies of horses, he shifts back to the youth's ability to benefit the *city*. Only then does the youth respond that Socrates speaks nobly.

The horses are to be used by the city. Socrates' list of equine deficiencies, which are to be remedied by the cavalry commander, initially points to a harmony of interest between the horses and the army they serve. But gradually the focus shifts away from providing for the strength and the hunger of the horses, toward the training and ordering of the horses – now said to be naturally prone to rebellious kicking (III.3.4) – who must be prepared to take risks in a battle from which they will not benefit. The horses, then, are clearly exploited for the war effort.

---

9 The same focus on the successful use of virtue will be implicit in Socrates' advice to the younger Pericles (III.5.28).

Socrates next turns to the horsemen. The youth must attempt to "make them better." Better for whom? This question is neither answered nor explicitly raised. And yet, mirroring the movement of the discussion of the horses, there occurs the same subtle shift in beneficiary. At first, the horsemen are to be made more skilled in mounting their horses; in this way they, as individuals, will "more likely be saved" (III.3.5). Risk is mentioned, and yet the focus remains on training the men to be proficient, strong, and safe. But Socrates then suggests that the youth "sharpen the souls of the horsemen and arouse their anger against the enemy, things that make them more stouthearted" (III.3.7). Is this sharpening of soul still in the interest of the soldiers (Cf. III.9.4-7)? Is it advantageous to have one's psyche molded by the dictates of a useful rage (ἐξοργίζειν)? Madmen too are recognized by all (III.3.1, cf. IV.6.10); yet no one desires to be a madman (μαίνομαι).[10]

Only here, after the horsemen have been made good and stouthearted, does the question of how to make them *obey* become pressing. Apparently the horsemen, at least, will find it in their interest to obey throughout the period of their training; they will consider their training to be self-improvement, i.e. to be good for them (motive one). But now, unless they are persuaded to obey, the horsemen will be of "no benefit"—presumably to the cavalry commander, or to the city. The youth seeks Socrates' advice: how can he make them obey? Socrates responds that, as the youth already knows, "in every matter human beings most want to obey those they believe to be best" (III.3.9). Once again the question must arise: best in what sense? Best for whom, or at what art? Presumably the art of generalship is at issue, and yet its character remains in question.

10 Cf. *Protagoras* 350b and the origin of the word "berserk" in the Old Norse word *berserkr*.

Does the best general, in seeking the army's or the city's good, seek what is best for his soldiers?

Socrates here analogizes generalship or rule, by providing three examples of obedience to the one who possesses visible skill or knowledge. Sick people obey those whom they believe to be skilled physicians; those on a ship obey those whom they believe to be skilled pilots; in farming, certain unnamed people obey those whom they believe to be skilled in farming (III.3.9). The art of medicine obviously serves the advantage of the ruled, i.e. the patient. The art of piloting serves not only the ruled but the ruler as well; the pilot is in the same boat as his passengers. But does obedience to the knower of the art of farming serve the interest of the ruled, or merely that of the ruler? It would be very useful to know: Who is obeying? Other independent farmers, being trained to farm by themselves? Or the farmers' own slaves?

Socrates here qualifies his earlier stridency in asserting that the virtue of rule consists in knowledge and knowledge alone. Here it is not merely knowledge, but *visible* knowledge – or perhaps "apparent" knowledge – that makes one a suitable ruler. Socrates leaves it ambiguous whether the ruler needs to appear *and to be* most knowledgeable, or merely to seem, and be believed, to be most knowledgeable. The youth, appropriately (cf. II.6.39, III.6.16), takes Socrates to mean that both knowledge and its appearance will be necessary. Socrates seems here to acknowledge, then, that in real politics his earlier principle – that knowledge is *the* virtue of a ruler – must be qualified to some extent by the ability to inspire consent, or at least confidence or admiration.

"If I am clearly the best among them," asks the youth, "will this be enough for them to obey me?" (III.3.10). But according to Socrates, even this – even knowledge that

is visible and thus persuades to obedience – is not enough. The commander's visible knowledge must be accompanied by the ability to "teach" the soldiers that obeying him is "both more noble and more conducive to their safety" (III.3.10, cf. *Oeconomicus* XI 8-13). The soldiers must believe that the commander leads them *both* to what is exalted, virtuous, or even self-sacrificial, *and*, simultaneously, to what is prudent, cautious, and self-interested. The youth is appropriately confused; how can he teach this? Perhaps he also wonders if such activity is properly called teaching. "Much more easily, by Zeus," Socrates replies, "than if you had to teach them that bad things are better and more profitable than good things." But this new task is, in a way, *equivalent* to the previous task. To teach that the noble is the safe—if the noble involves courageously risking and even sacrificing one's life in battle—*is* to teach that the bad is more profitable than the good. Or is it? In describing the "easier" task, Socrates adds a religious oath. The youth will teach the new lesson much more easily *by Zeus*, than he could teach the old and identical lesson.

The youth understands Socrates to be saying that the cavalry commander must employ the art of rhetoric. Socrates seems to concur and abruptly mentions law. Through reasoned speech we learned "all the things that we have learned are most noble according to law" (III.3.11). And yet there may also be *other* noble things, or at least one other (τι ἄλλο καλόν), learned through reasoned speech but not through law. "Those best at teaching use speech the most"; does this apply also to the gods (cf. *Laws* 859a with 861b)? Those with "the most understanding of the most serious things converse most nobly." Socrates leaves unclear the character of the most serious things. Are they equivalent to the noble things? If so, which noble things – the noble things learned through the reasoned speech

of law, or through reasoned speech alone? We must also wonder why those speeches were not called noble, whereas this "conversation" regarding the most serious things *is* called noble. Socrates seems here to point to the possibility of philosophy as an extralegal endeavor which, at its highest level, involves not rhetoric but mutual dialogue (cf. *Greater Hippias* 286a-d).[11]

But abruptly, Socrates shifts again – this time, to a discussion of the chorus sent by Athens to a quadrennial religious festival on the sacred island of Delos. Socrates claims that if the youth had pondered either this chorus, or the speeches of the law, he would already have knowledge of the rhetoric successful cavalry commanders must employ. The members of the chorus sent to Delos, understanding themselves to be viewed by the gods—perhaps even seeing themselves from a divine perspective—outmatch every other chorus. A self-consciousness filtered through the eyes of the gods seems to make possible this unprecedented abundance of good or manly men (εὐανδρία). The love of honor spurs the Athenians toward what is "noble and honored" (III.3.13); Socrates here differentiates the noble from the honored. The horsemen would take risks if they thought they would obtain "praise and honor" (III.3.14); Socrates here differentiates praise from honor. It is divine honor, not human praise, that the risk-taking horsemen seek. If the young cavalry commander had pondered the effect of law, or the effect of religion, in creating a synthesis of nobility and self-interest, he would already understand how to lead. Socrates implies that courage, law, and religion are codependent or share a fundamentally similar outlook. An army works best when it borrows the outlook of law and religion. A divine self-consciousness is extremely helpful, if not

[11] Perhaps Socrates is making a gentle attempt to turn the youth toward this way of life. Xenophon himself was in the cavalry.

necessary, for one who must make the sacrifices necessary to healthy political life. Socrates implies that the society that is more religious will, ceteris paribus, always be more successful in war.

Socrates' final advice to the youth summarizes the chapter's model of rule: "Don't hesitate, but try to turn your men toward the things from which you yourself will benefit, and also the other citizens through you" (III.3.15). Self-benefit, according to this mentality, comes first (motive four); benefiting the other citizens is a secondary concern, and may even be a kind of byproduct. Do "the other citizens" include the general's own men? Or are the soldiers, despite the general's affection for them, means to the happiness of others in the city? "But by Zeus," the young man replies, "I shall try." Apparently he has learned his lesson: that religion may be employed by a shrewd ruler in what might be seen as a fundamentally exploitative model of rule. The goal of Xenophon or his Socrates, of course, is not to suggest that such a model should be considered or adopted, but rather that it should be presented and thoroughly examined, as an unchoiceworthy yet eternal possibility. Accordingly, Socrates moves quickly into the presentation of a new model of rule: the model of household management.

Rule as Household Management (3.4)

Chapter Four presents Socrates' conversation with a battle-hardened soldier indignant at his fellow citizens' failure to elect him general. He seems to display the sacrificial mindset described in Chapter Two. Proudly and immediately, he undresses and displays to Socrates his many battle scars, as evidence that he deserved to be elected. Worn down from his military service, he is particularly indignant at the Athenians not only because they failed to elect him but because in his place they elected a wealthy milksop, Antisthenes, who has never done anything admirable in the army. Socrates defends Antisthenes; he may become a fine general, given his love of victory and his ability to gather wealth and provide provisions. Just as he has sponsored choruses well, despite his inability to teach singing and dancing, he may carry off the victory in war without understanding battlefield courage firsthand. Unlike the cavalry commander in the previous chapter, Nicomachides vehemently denies – swearing by Zeus – any connection between leading a chorus and leading an army (III.4.3).

In this chapter, Socrates 'flattens' military and political rule to the level of any other endeavor: "whatever someone presides over, if he knows what is needed and is able to procure it, he will be a good presiding officer, whether it is a chorus or a household or an army that he presides over" (III.4.6). Nicomachides is flabbergasted. He swears by

Zeus that he never thought he would hear Socrates say that good household managers would make good generals; he obviously spends very little time with Socrates. His astonishment would also seem to imply that Socrates has not only refrained from saying these things publicly, but has constructed the public persona of a respectful and conventional gentleman.

But now he offers to join with Nicomachides in comparing the tasks of the household manager with those of the general. Ordering, punishing, and honoring belong to both types of rule. Yet Nicomachides repeatedly objects – three times in this chapter (III.4.4, 10, 11) – that the household manager knows nothing about the most important thing: fighting. How will Socrates answer this? He evades twice, then finally admits the truth: in his new model of rule as household management, the ruler seeks in the most profitable way to assign the fighting to others; he refrains from fighting whenever he finds this more profitable (III.4.11). But Nicomachides had meant that the general must fight *himself*. At the chapter's conclusion, Socrates reiterates both his flattened conception of rule, according to which "attending to private affairs differs only in terms of multitude from attending to public ones" (III.4.12), and his earlier claim that the virtue of the ruler consists in understanding alone.

Nicomachides' Implicit Objections

The Chapter as a whole, then, presents a confrontation between the model of rule as self-sacrifice and the new Socratic model of rule as household management.

Nicomachides seems to have three separate but related objections to the way Socrates strips dignity or nobility from military or political rule.

First, Nicomachides objects generally to the Socratic denial of any essential difference between public rule and other types of management. This denial implies that political rule is no more dignified or exalted than household management.

Second, he objects to the Socratic characterization of rule as essentially self-interested rather than noble. Antisthenes, loving victory yet cleverly keeping at a distance from the actual fighting, will gladly spend his wealth on "victory in contests of war—a victory *with* the whole city" (III.4.5). He will treat the army as a means to his own honor. Nicomachides would seem to despise such selfishness. And yet, he himself was unsatisfied with a purely self-sacrificial model of rule. To judge from his indignation, his own sacrifices for the city were made partly on the assumption that some reward, such as office or honor, would accrue to him personally.[12] And yet he, at least, has displayed noble courage and sacrificed greatly, in a way that a household manager like Antisthenes never would.

Third, and perhaps most fundamentally, Nicomachides would seem to object to something implicit in Socrates' model of rule as household management: the *separation* of the ruler from the ruled. Nicomachides' insistence that the general fight *with* his soldiers points to his understanding of a general as "one of the men," who shares in their hardships and sacrifices. The dignity of rule lies precisely in its being rule over *equals* (Strauss 63). The model of household management, which implies that the ruled are *beneath* the manager, or even akin to slaves, strips dignity from rule. And yet

12 Cf. *Iliad* IX 314-327.

Nicomachides himself had sought separation from, and elevation over, the ruled. He had felt, and still feels, great dissatisfaction with remaining "one of the men." It makes him indignant to think he must continue simply to serve and sacrifice. Elective office is appealing precisely because it offers a kind of separation from his fellows. His own desires, then—without Socrates' imposition—point to a great problem in the model of rule over equals, or the model of service to (betters or) equals. Not enough honor or reward, not enough separation or exaltation, result from such ruling, to satisfy the rulers.

Rule as Separation

And yet problems also plague a model according to which a ruler sees himself as *separate* from, or elevated above, the ruled. Why would such a ruler continue to *serve*? Such service might no longer be coherent; it might even be unjust. Can the high clear-sightedly *serve* the low? Devotion would seem to be most coherent when directed toward a being or beings understood as *more* admirable and *more* worthy than the one who serves, not less. This seems to be one lesson of Socrates' later encounter with the beautiful Theodote (cf. III.11.3, Strauss 87).[13] If a ruler firmly understood himself to be more worthy than those whom he ruled, would not justice itself seem to demand that he seek primarily his own interest rather than serve theirs? And yet, from Nicomachides' perspective, this would strip rule of its dignity, of its self-sacrificial nobility. In addition, it would open the door to exploitation of the ruled. Or, perhaps more radically – why would a ruler who understood himself to be separate from or elevated above the ruled

[13] And yet the gods themselves, though far more admirable and exalted than men, spend their time benefitting and serving them.

continue to rule at all? Not only service, but even rule itself might lose its appeal. Why would such a ruler any longer feel (i) a sense of obligation, to a community of which he was no longer fully a part, or (ii) the allure of receiving honor from those he understood to be less worthy than himself? Such a ruler might come to see rule not as household management, which already sounds like a chore, but as household servitude, as did Socrates' companion Aristippus (II.1.8-9, cf. *Edu. Cyrus* I.6.7).

It would seem, then, that a conception of rule according to which a ruler feels separated from, or exalted over, those whom he rules, presents us with a deeply problematic tension. Such a conception simultaneously (i) is essential to creating a *desire* to rule, and (ii) thought through, becomes destructive of the *motive* to rule nobly (or at all). How can a mentality of service and a mentality of rule coincide?

The same problem, though in a different form, was implied in an earlier discussion between Socrates and his lighthearted companion Critobulus. The peak of Book II's exploration of friendship, Chapter 6, had presented Critobulus' anxiety regarding the possibility of friendship between virtuous men (II.6.16). Gentlemen, precisely because they crave honors, tend to fall into factious strife with each other as they compete for what is noble. Socrates, in response, had suggested an alliance of gentlemen, an aristocratic party, as "perhaps *the* solution to the political problem" (Strauss 51, emphasis mine). And yet a problem was lurking even there: in the discussion of the tenability of such an alliance, Socrates had mentioned that "it is far better to treat well the best who are fewer in number, than the worse who are more numerous, for the wicked require many more good deeds than the good" (III.6.27). The logic of aristocracy, then, with its lionization of virtue, leads not necessarily to a class of noble caretakers but

to a class that is callous toward the masses, or even tyrannically inhumane. The problem, to rephrase it slightly, is that those who might be inclined to rule – especially those who would make the best rulers – need honor and elevation as a lure to undertake the often difficult task of ruling. And yet that very elevation leads to a mindset by which rulers may find exploitation or repression of the ruled to be reasonable and just. The incoherence of serving one's lessers may lead them to see rule as either an opportunity to exploit or as an undignified chore.

The Haze of Rule

According to the analysis of rule presented so far, it would seem necessary that a good ruler live in a kind of haze. He would need to view himself as both within his community and separate from it. If he were not within it, he could not be obligated or inclined to serve it; and if he were not separate from it, he would not feel the exalted allure of rule. He would need, also, to view himself as simultaneously below, equal to, and above those whom he ruled. If he were not below them, the obligation to (or coherence of) noble service would seem to evaporate. If he were not equal to them, something of the dignity of rule would be lost. If he were not above them, the necessary rewards of rule, the honors and the admiration, would be lacking.

So what is the solution to this problem? Must a ruler simply maintain an incoherent conception of his own activity? Must he believe he is ruling *over* something

that is *above* him, in order to maintain both his nobility and its exaltedness?[14] Can a concerned observer of politics depend upon the durability of that confusion? The political problem takes shape, in these chapters, in the form of the following question: How can one motivate the best, or the most capable of ruling, *both* to feel the need to serve, and, simultaneously, to feel the allure of rule as exalted and honored? The next chapter, thankfully, promises an answer.

[14] This confusion parallels that of the general in Chapter 2, who, as Socrates presented him, simultaneously viewed generalship as rule (i.e. good for him) and as service (i.e. sacrificial or bad for him).

Rule as Mutual Erotic Devotion (3.5)

Chapter Five is a dialogue between Socrates and the younger Pericles, son of the great Pericles. Here, Xenophon presents a model of rule as erotic devotion to the fatherland. The chapter may be divided into five parts. First, Pericles' anxiety regarding the military future of Athens sparks an analysis of the current virtues of Athenian citizens (III.5.1-6). Second, Socrates and Pericles investigate methods of turning Athenian citizens toward their ancient virtue (7-14). Third, Pericles gives an account of the contemporary inversion of virtue (15-20). Fourth, Socrates equates virtue in generalship to knowledge and exhorts Pericles to learning (21-24). Finally come Socrates' policy suggestion and exhortation to what is noble (25-28).

Socrates' Anti-Periclean Conservatism

The chapter as a whole presents an implicit attack on the older Pericles and an explicit recommendation of a conservative or even reactionary politics. Periclean imperialism is attacked from the very first sentence. With the younger Pericles as general, Socrates hopes that Athens will "both be better at matters of war and have a better reputation regarding them, and that it will overpower its enemies" (III.5.1). A city's being

better at matters of war, then, is not the same as its overpowering its enemies; the best policy may be defensive, even isolationist. Socrates then praises fear as conducive to order (III.5.5-6). He analogizes a city to a ship; terror at storms and enemies can make sailors more orderly and more easily ruled. This might suggest that Socrates favors a militaristic society, but not an imperialistic one.

When the young Pericles asks how he might turn the citizens toward a renewed erotic passion for "their ancient virtue, fame, and happiness" (III.5.7), Socrates immediately suggests a much cooler, more level-headed perspective. The citizens should view virtue as wealth, as something profitable. The elder Pericles' policy of stirring up erotic passion in the citizens (Cf. Thucydides II.43) is quickly rejected. Instead, Socrates spends much of the chapter urging Pericles to turn the citizens toward a reverence for their ancestors.

Never does he consider praising, as the elder Pericles praised (Thuc. II.36), the contemporary over the ancient (Strauss 66). Only with hesitation does he praise even the more recent ancestors: those ancestors may be praised, *if Pericles wishes*. They are only "*said to have* far surpassed human beings of their time," whereas the more ancient ancestors were "clearly the most excellent human beings of their time" (III.5.11, 10). Reverence for the ancestors prohibits any thought of surpassing them in virtue; only the Athenians' contemporaries may be surpassed (III.5.14). When Pericles despairs at the disobedience of Athenian soldiers, Socrates reminds him of the nobility, lawfulness, grandeur, and justice of the judgments made by the Council of the Areopagus, an aristocratic institution weakened by Pericles the elder (Strauss 67).

But at the chapter's end Socrates advises, surprisingly, an innovative policy of guerrilla warfare borrowed from barbarians (III.5.25-27). His recommended mentality of conservatism, then, is primarily for the sake of the ruled; the rulers themselves must not have the latitude of their prudence restricted by a hidebound reverence for tradition. Circumstances may demand even an unorthodox cosmopolitan borrowing of tactics that are certainly not virtuous in any conventional sense. Pericles calls these tactics not noble but useful (III.5.27); he seems amenable to implementing them. It seems that Socrates' understanding has enabled him to become, behind the scenes, the true general, even though no one elected him (cf. III.1.4).

Despite his innovative policy suggestion, Socrates' overall political stance would seem to remain conservative or even reactionary. The popular mindset should be one of self-restraint and traditionalism. The citizens must be kept lawful and reverent; the orderliness of chorus members is twice praised (III.5.6, 18). Emulation of Sparta is recommended (III.5.14); the citizens must obey their leaders and strive always for virtue, especially physical or military virtue. But all of this, of course, raises a pressing question: What are the grounds for Socrates' conservatism? When we consider Socrates' own way of life, which is anything but traditional, and his praise of free-thinking inquiry as the peak of that life (IV.5.12, IV.6.1), his conservatism seems quite strange. Why would such a free thinker endorse a hidebound or even anti-philosophically reverent traditionalism? In other words, how can Socratic political theory be reconciled with Socratic political practice?

Confidence and Fear

A closer look at Chapter Five reveals a strange 'penduluming effect.' Socrates seems to alternate between, on the one hand, a praise of confidence, self-assertiveness, and even self-exaltation, and, on the other hand, and a praise of fear, reverence, and humility. The praise of confidence begins with the central of five Athenian virtues listed by Socrates: the Athenians, he says approvingly, are more well-disposed (εὐμενής) toward themselves than their rivals the Boeotians (III.5.2). Reminding them of the noble deeds of their ancestors is useful in making them more *exalted* (μείζω) "and turning them toward attending to virtue" (III.5.3). Socrates seems to approve of a high self-estimation, not as a result of virtue but as its precondition, as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy.

But strangely, when Pericles explains that in fact the Athenians have lately *lost* their confidence and become very *fearful*, Socrates embraces this too: "I perceive that this is the case, but in my opinion the disposition of the city is now more acceptable to a good man who rules it. For confidence/boldness (θάρσος) implants neglect, easygoingness, and disobedience, while fear makes people more attentive, more obedient, and more orderly" (III.5.5). Boldness is bad, and fear creates order.

But immediately, Socrates pendulums back: the citizens must be persuaded that virtue already belongs to them (III.5.8). This form of confidence will make them attend to virtue.

But they must simultaneously be convinced that they don't yet fully *possess* virtue. They must strive to claim the virtue that is theirs, fearful of losing it. The ancestors were superior, and are to be humbly revered.

And yet, when Pericles brings up the gods, Socrates shifts the focus to *demi*gods and ancient *human* heroes. This focus on demigods parallels the teaching that virtue is the Athenian patrimony, both nearby and slightly out of reach: instead of humility before the untouchable majesty of the wholly divine, Socrates suggests that the most magnificent virtue is, though not yet attained, attainable by human beings. His religious doctrine simultaneously encourages both reverence and boldness, preventing both the passivity or defeatism of groveling humility, and the laziness (or hubristic stupidity) of self-satisfaction. The teaching regarding demigods and human heroes would seem to err on the side of implanting confidence in human beings. But Socrates immediately qualifies this, explaining the lack of virtue among Athenians as the result of confidence: "just as some others, who have become easygoing due to their great preeminence and mightiness, fall behind their adversaries, so the Athenians too neglected themselves when they had great preeminence and due to this became worse" (III.5.13).

The question then arises: why is the balance between fear and confidence in a political community so difficult to maintain? Socrates himself, in the first half of this chapter, must pendulum a total of five times between the two goals. Confidence seems crucial to energizing the citizenry to pursue virtue; but that very confidence can itself easily destroy virtue through self-satisfaction. Virtue brings with it the self-consciousness of worth and the thought of reward. Perhaps, then, Socrates points to a problem within virtue itself. If virtue is noble or self-sacrificial,[15] it seems to deserve a reward. But that reward, if it involves or consists in a cessation of sacrifice, means that one's virtue is

[15] An implicit question arises here: is civic or political virtue necessarily self-sacrificial or self-denying? And if so, why? This question will be addressed through Book IV's investigation of piety and law.

destroyed. But is not virtue the greatest good? Is the reward then a punishment? But without a reward, how can one be motivated to strive for virtue? If virtue culminates in its own cessation or in a reward, virtue would seem mercenary, a mere means to self-interest; this is not exalted enough to match our opinions about what virtue ought to be. But to say that virtue has no reward, and remains always an exalted end in itself — or, to say that virtue's reward is simply the opportunity to exercise more virtue — seems too bleak and unsatisfying to match our hopes. Virtue unrewarded loses luster; virtue rewarded implodes.

The dangers of confidence as a symptom of virtue might explain, to some extent, Socrates' conservatism. Civic virtue might itself create feelings of worthiness and thus demands for a deserved cessation from striving. Virtue would then be discarded in the name of justice. A general unleashing and encouragement of innovation and self-interest would allow for this novel and self-interested neglect of virtue to proceed (Cf. *Edu. Cyrus* VIII.8). A reverent traditionalism, by providing role-models whose virtues could never quite be matched, would prevent overconfidence, neglect, and luxury. But this argument can only go so far. To understand more fully the grounds for Socratic conservatism, we must turn to the chapter's central section.

The Inversion of Virtue

After Socrates' praise of a piety based on reverence for demigods and human heroes, he recommends the emulation of Sparta. Here Pericles despairs. How will the Athenians ever mimic the Spartans, given that the Athenians now have contempt for their

own fathers? Pericles points to an astonishing feature of Athenian life during this time of strife and social dissolution: it is precisely the *most* honor-loving, those who, "as opinion has it, are distinguished among the citizens by their gentlemanliness (nobility and goodness)" who "are the most disobedient of all" (III.5.19). Upon hearing this suggestion, Socrates attempts to change the subject (III.5.20), and, after a brief protest from Pericles, succeeds (III.5.21). But the point has been made. If Pericles is right that those who had always displayed the most intense love of honor—a trait that Socrates himself had listed as a crucial civic virtue (III.5.3)—are now becoming the most disorderly or even the most vicious, then the question arises – why?

In Pericles' account, the answer becomes clear: the honor-loving, as it seems, are viewing their own disobedience and immorality *as virtue.* The Athenians "not only themselves neglect good condition but even ridicule those who attend to it" (III.5.15). They "exult (ἀγάλλονται) in their contempt for their rulers" (III.5.16). While "using the common property as if it were foreign, they fight in turn over this and take most delight in their abilities/powers (δυνάμεσι) in such matters" (III.5.16). Contempt for the old and the lawful are becoming not merely acceptable but *esteemed*. In these times of severe social instability, when justice, law, and tradition are coming into question, it seems that virtue has reverted to what might be called a more natural form. Virtue has become the power, ability, and willingness to get what one wants (Cf. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* II.53, III.82-84; Machiavelli, *The Prince* Chap. VIII; Rousseau,

Second Discourse: St. Martin's Press pg. 128).[16] Courage, the love of honor, and the love of virtue itself have turned *against* lawfulness.

And yet to call this type of virtue *natural* is misleading. The problem diagnosed by Pericles has to some extent, paradoxically, been created by law itself. Precisely *because* law has always been so highly revered by the citizens, it may come to seem mighty and glorious – especially to those whose love of honor is naturally strong and has been inflamed by society – to liberate themselves from and conquer Law itself. When lawfulness as a virtue becomes questionable, then, a society of robust and honor-loving souls tends toward something far worse than a reversion to natural virtue or an absence of law; it tends toward a reactionary and deliberate lawlessness.

A healthy society, at least in Socrates' portrait, must heighten both the reverence for law and the love of virtue, especially courage. But in such a context this very reverence for law creates, if not the seeds of its own destruction, at least an extreme fragility. It is the Socratic awareness of this fragility that explains Socratic conservatism. Through free inquiry, Socrates came to understand the character of something every healthy society in some way takes for granted: lawfulness. Any innovation in the basic norms or structure of a community threatens to spread and infect the rest. After a certain degree of reverence for the old and the lawful has withered, virtue as lawfulness may, not simply evaporate, but *flip* or *invert* into virtue as anti-lawfulness.

In a situation marked by such fragility, can lawfulness be saved at all? We will see in Chapter Three of Book Four that, and why, it can. Until then, we are left to wonder.

---

[16] And the city itself must consistently set a bad public example of this, with its foreign policy (III.5.25-27, III.1.6).

Aristocracy and the Fatherland

Socrates' praise of the aristocratic Council of the Areopagus points us back to the unresolved problem of the relational character of rule. We encountered, in analyzing Chapter Four, the danger of aristocratic exploitation. The question there became: How can a ruler be made to consider himself to be both *beneath* the ruled, so that he might feel an obligation to serve them, and, simultaneously, *above* the ruled, so that he might feel honored and exalted in his task? Service requires *honoring* the object of devotion, and yet politics demands that the *best* serve. How could the ruler's haze of relational ambiguity be resolved – in either direction – without dissolving either the motive to rule (i.e., one might come to see oneself a mere servant) or the motive to rule well (i.e., one might come to see oneself as deserving of the freedom to exploit)?

A closer look at Chapter Five reveals the answer. As the younger Pericles is informed of the virtues of Athenian citizens, Socrates finally introduces a crucial concept. The Athenians' are honor-loving and affectionate, qualities which "spur one to take risks on behalf of both good reputation and *fatherland"* (III.5.3). What is the fatherland? It would seem to be a kind of transcendent abstraction of the city. The good citizen considers his own noble ancestors (and their traditions), his current compatriots, and his future descendants all to be a part of this larger whole. He fits within the structure of, and serves, this grander being.

The belated introduction of the fatherland clarifies how Pericles could simultaneously *disdain* his fellow citizens as immoral (III.5.15-17) and deeply desire to

serve them — just as Nicomachides, in the previous chapter, had felt an indignant contempt for the Athenians (partly because they refused to allow him to serve them as general), while that contempt in no way diminished his desire to serve. All of this is possible because, to a large extent, these men yearning for the noble things seem not to conceive of themselves as serving the people, but rather as serving the fatherland itself. The concept of the fatherland solves the relational problem of rule. A man may simultaneously rule and serve, because he feels himself to be erotically devoted to the fatherland, as are the other citizens – whom he rules. His service to them can, whenever necessary, be understood as an incidental byproduct of his service to the fatherland. He looks up to the fatherland and down upon them.

Yet pressing questions arise. First, what exactly *is* the fatherland? How is it perceived, and what role does it play in spurring ambition? And second, can even the fatherland resolve the difficulty of whether rule is good for the ruler? At the chapter's end, Socrates exhorts the young general Pericles to heed his political and military advice. If Pericles achieves any of the things Socrates has advised, Socrates tells him, "it will be both noble for you and good for the city. While, if you are unable to accomplish some one of them, you will neither harm the city nor shame yourself" (III.5.28). His political involvement may be either noble or shameful for him; no mention is made of whether it will be good or harmful for him. Only the *city's* good or harm is considered. The crucial question remains unanswered: Is the ruler's noble action good for him?

Rule as Erotic Devotion to a Vision of Oneself (3.6)

Chapter Six would seem to present an unexplained descent (Strauss 69). Leaving behind young Pericles' self-forgetting devotion to the fatherland, we turn to Glaucon, whose wild ambition and unjustified pride have recently led him to make a fool of himself before the assembly. Socrates, who was well-intentioned toward Glaucon not for the sake of Glaucon but for the sake of Charmides and Plato, Socrates' own friends, conversed with him in an attempt to make him more moderate.

First, Socrates describes the objects of – and even inflames – Glaucon's ambitious hopes, in order to get his full attention (Cf. Plato, *Alcibiades* 105a-e). Next, he asks Glaucon how he plans to benefit the city, as such benefiting will be necessary for attaining the great honor he seeks. After a banal interrogation regarding revenues and expenditures, war power, guard posts, silver mines, and agriculture, Glaucon – aware that he is "being made fun of" for his total neglect of the ruling art – momentarily turns against rule itself as "a huge task" (III.6.13). Socrates then takes the opportunity to compare rule to household management and to exhort Glaucon to 'start small' by helping his Uncle Charmides manage his own impoverished estate (cf. Xen. *Symp.* IV.29-33). Finally, Socrates exhorts Glaucon to seek knowledge of the art of rule as a means to

praise and admiration. Understanding is necessary but not sufficient for a good reputation (Cf. Strauss 71), while ignorance is necessary but not sufficient for a bad one (III.6.16).

Glaucon Versus Pericles

Glaucon is a much less impressive interlocutor than the young Pericles. Not only does he lack self-knowledge and moderation, but his ambitions are much more self-interested. Pericles desired to rule in order to benefit the city or the fatherland (motive three); he showed great anxiety at the city's deterioration. Glaucon, on the other hand, seems almost entirely motivated by the desire for personal honor (motive four). The city is a mere means to his own exaltation; its good is an afterthought: Socrates must remind him of it (III.6.3). Those who most desire to rule often give no thought, strangely, to the art or exercise of ruling itself. They seek not to gain a new virtue but to display and be rewarded for a virtue they feel confident they naturally and spontaneously possess (Cf. IV.2.6 and Plato's *Alcibiades* 105b). Glaucon has been so focused on the great rewards of rule that he has ignored entirely the exercise of the ruling virtue; he thinks he can become famous without first learning how to rule. Socrates seeks to correct this, steering him toward the possession of virtue and away from its rewards.

But if Glaucon is unimpressive or even ridiculous, the question then arises: Why descend from Pericles to Glaucon? What was wrong with the younger Pericles' model of political involvement as selfless, mutual erotic devotion to the fatherland? What in Pericles' own mentality necessitated the turn to, and investigation of, a character like

Glaucon? For the answer, we must turn back to the *Memorabilia*'s first mention of the fatherland, in Socrates' dialogue with the half-Socratic hedonist Aristippus, in Book II.

Aristippus, perhaps influenced by Socrates, had compared rule not merely to household management but to household slavery. Socrates had attempted to convince him that rule was in fact choiceworthy. First he praised willing suffering – seeming to admit that ruling is a self-sacrificial activity – as something that the sufferer can voluntarily end, and from which he can hope for rewards (II.1.18). But then he called "those sorts of rewards for one's labors…of little worth." Then came the true defense of rule as a choiceworthy endeavor:

> …what about those who labor so that they may acquire good friends or that they may subdue their enemies, or so that by becoming powerful in their bodies and souls they may manage their own house nobly and treat their friends well and do good deeds for their fatherland? Surely one should know that these both labor for such things with pleasure and take delight in living, since they admire themselves and are praised and emulated by others. (II.1.19)

The motive to benefiting and serving the fatherland, at least in this initial presentation, would seem to lie in the desire for self-admiration and praise. Perhaps, then, the wild Glaucon is merely more transparent about motives the younger Pericles secretly shares? Perhaps even young Pericles, knowingly or unknowingly, hoped that erotic devotion to the fatherland would in fact be a means of self-exaltation. Perhaps even he understood personal fame to be the middle term connecting virtue and happiness (see IV.5.7, cf. *Edu. Cyrus* V.2.10-12).

Glaucon's Hopes

If Glaucon might represent, with comic hypertrophy or comic openness, motives shared by every man devoted to the fatherland, we must investigate those motives. In a

crucial passage of Chapter Six, Socrates outlines what Glaucon hopes he will attain through presiding over the city. Apparently agreeing with Socrates' characterization, Glaucon remains in Socrates' presence "with pleasure." An analysis of this list of hopes is essential to an understanding of the new model of rule presented (and, once again, contrasted with the Socratic model of household management) in this chapter.

Upon hearing of Glaucon's plans to preside over their city, Socrates immediately swears by Zeus and calls this noble, "if indeed anything else among human beings is." Presiding over the city is noble because (γάρ):

> it is clear that, should you accomplish this, you will be able to obtain for yourself whatever you desire and be competent to benefit your friends; you will raise up your paternal household; you will enlarge your fatherland; you will be famous, first in the city, then in Greece, and perhaps, like Themistocles, even among the barbarians. And wherever you are, you will be gazed at from all sides/admired. (III.6.2)

Presiding over the city is noble first of all because it will make Glaucon omnipotent. *Anything* he desires will be his. Presumably this would include, if he happens to desire it, immortality. Socrates mentions the benefiting of friends, but the stress is on Glaucon's own competence as a benefactor. He will enlarge his fatherland and become more and more famous, self-expansively, until his own reputation fills the world. He will become as enduring as Themistocles or Themistocles' enduring name. *Wherever he is* – apparently even when alone – he will be gazed at or admired. Glaucon would seem, in all of this, to expect from his presiding a great change in his condition. When Socrates said all of this, "Glaucon was exalted/made great (ἐμεγαλύνετο) and remained with pleasure" (III.6.3). Perhaps, without realizing it, he was already experiencing the great reward of self-admiration for which he so fervently longed.

A curious inversion of causality seems to have occurred in Glaucon's mind. He has come to see honor, not merely as the *effect* of great virtue, but as its cause. Or, through close association, honor and virtue now seem interchangeable. If he can simply preside over the city, honor from all human beings will (announce or) lead to a change in his being, and thus to great rewards. The precise character of these great rewards is vague: does he simply expect, from his honor and thus virtue, to deserve further honor? This is left unclear. But it seems that Glaucon hopes, through his erotic devotion to the city, to obtain a status nearly divine.

Glaucon considers the city a means to self-exaltation. Benefiting the city will lead to the honor he craves. Only as an afterthought, in the glow of exaltation, does he examine "just then where he would begin" in doing good deeds for the city. But the city, the act of benefiting the city, or the resultant honors – if they are to transform his very being – must be quite exalted things themselves.[17] It is for this reason that, despite their differences, Glaucon's vision of rule must share a key concept with Pericles' vision. Pericles' model of rule was one of mutual erotic devotion to the fatherland. Glaucon, far more blatantly self-interested, presents a model of rule as erotic devotion to an ideal of oneself as a god. Glaucon thus solves the problem of the ruler's self-interest that plagued Pericles' model of rule. Yet Glaucon too must lean upon a conception of the fatherland. If the city is so powerful as to be transformative, it must – though a means – be exalted. But the question has become only more pressing: What is the fatherland?

---

[17] Whether there is a tension in the very notion of an exalted means, especially an exalted means to one's own self-interest, is a question that must be left unresolved. (Cf. Euthydemus on prayer at IV.2.36, cf. I.4.10, and Plato, *Euthyphro* 14d-e).

Rule as Friendship (3.7)

Chapter Seven presents a conversation with Charmides. No interlocutor in Book III—or in the *Memorabilia* as a whole—is so highly praised as Charmides. He was, Socrates perceived, "a remarkable (ἀξιόλογος) man and far more able than those engaged in political affairs at that time" (III.7.1). Charmides was a very close associate of Socrates; he doubted Socrates' *daimonion* (Plato, *Theages* 128e) and saw Socrates dancing alone (Symp. II.19). He also possessed great natural virtue. Five times – in only the first half of this chapter – his great power or ability (δυνατός, δύναμις) is mentioned. He had the natural ability or prudence to advise political men nobly (III.7.3). Socrates advises him to exercise (motive two) the ruling virtue he already possesses. To exercise this virtue by engaging in politics will benefit Charmides' fellow citizens and friends, and – not least – Charmides himself (III.7.9). By the end of this chapter, Socrates has solved the problem of the ruler's good with a new model of rule, a model of rule as friendship. Yet to arrive at this new model, he must eliminate the awe or fear that prohibits Charmides' entrance into politics.

The Fatherland, The City, and The Demos

Charmides, despite his talents, is afraid of entering political life. From Socrates' and Xenophon's perspective, Charmides is hesitant to approach the *demos* (III.8.1). But when Socrates, in conversation with Charmides, analogizes that hesitation or fear to the hesitation of an admirable athlete, he speaks of the fatherland. Charmides responds that an athlete who failed to obtain honor "and enhance the reputation of his fatherland" would be "soft and cowardly." Socrates, turning to political engagement, then speaks of the city (πόλις). If a naturally powerful man hesitated to enlarge his city – the city's size, not its reputation, is mentioned – would he not plausibly be considered a coward? Here Charmides catches on and becomes reticent (III.7.2). Socratic analogies, this one included, often function to split the good from one's own, which human beings naturally conflate. After allowing reason to function freely, uninhibited by defensiveness or complacency with current opinions, Socrates returns his interlocutor to the circumstances at hand (cf. *Laws* 638d-641a). With Charmides, he appeals to shame and necessity after abstracting from, and then returning to, the particular circumstances. Is Charmides not a coward for – despite his great talents – failing to engage in political affairs?

Charmides questions Socrates' faith in his abilities. But Socrates has seen Charmides, behind the scenes, nobly advising the 'real' political men, just as we saw Socrates advising Pericles, or as Charmides saw Socrates dancing alone. Was the nobility of Charmides' advice, in Socrates' estimation, due primarily to the exercise of such great prudence, or to the good effects of that prudence for the city?

Having been convinced of his abilities or Socrates' competence to judge them, Charmides argues against political engagement on the grounds that private abilities are different from public abilities. In private, one converses; in public, one competes for a

prize (ἀγωνίζεσθαι). But Socrates denies, as he denied to Nicomachides (III.4.12, cf. Strauss 63), any essential difference between private and public action. In any activity, only ability matters; the number of spectators, be they none or a multitude, counts for nothing.

Charmides counters: Does Socrates not understand that awe (αἰδώς) and fear are "naturally inborn (ἔμφυτα) in human beings and that they present themselves/come to stand near one (παριστάμενα) far more in crowds than in private company?" (III.7.5). If Charmides' understanding of human nature is correct, human beings are naturally political animals, or very nearly so. Crowds, especially somewhat orderly crowds, can easily be perceived or even personified as a unity. Natural awe must merely be tethered to the political community or the fatherland, as a kind of deity, to whom respect and service must be paid (cf. especially Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* Vol. I, Part Two, Chapter 6).

But Socrates, in order to counteract Charmides' hesitation to enter politics, picks apart this perspective on the city. Most clearsightedly, the city is viewed not as the fatherland, nor even, perhaps, as a unity, but as a collection of individual human beings: fullers, shoemakers, carpenters, smiths, farmers, merchants, those who barter in the agora (III.8.6). The city is not, according to this account, more exalted than its parts. Charmides' shame or fear is irrational. Many in the city are senseless, weak, and easily overcome by men like the virtuous Charmides (III.7.5, 7.8).

Socrates concludes with an exhortation to self-understanding (III.7.9). If Charmides came to understand himself, he would better understand the fatherland or the city, unlike the many (οἱ πολλοί). If he understood himself, he would still speak of awe and

fear as natural in human beings, but he would not speak of them as "presenting themselves to one/coming near one (παριστάμενα)," as if from outside.

Rule as Friendship

In his final exhortation, Socrates tells Charmides not to neglect the city's affairs: "for when these things are going well, not only the other citizens but also your friends and, not least, you yourself will benefit" (III.7.9). This model of rule not only solves the problem of the ruler's own good, but apparently solves the problem of exploitation – through the introduction of friendship. According to this model of rule, a ruler benefits from ruling through a non-exalted, clearsighted enjoyment of (i) living in a well-functioning city, (ii) the exercise of his own virtue, (iii) the real – as opposed to vague, distant, and exalted – rewards of rule, such as honor (cf. II.1.18-19), and (iv) benefiting his friends. If a ruler's feeling of friendship can extend to the entire city, [18] the problem of rule will be solved. If men are only friends with those who are like them (cf. II.6.20-22), and the rulers are, or must consider themselves to be, superior to the many, then the problem of rule will remain. An analysis of Charmides' own political career may shed light upon this question (cf. Strauss 73). Though it came at the expense of religious reverence for the fatherland, Socrates would seem to have found a coherent and choiceworthy model of rule.

[18] Perhaps the recognition of this problem was one reason Socrates agreed with the Greeks that the ideal political arrangement was the small *polis*.

Book III: Xenophon's Typology of Rule

Glancing back over Book III's six portraits of political men, we find that Xenophon has systematized the essential, and universal, forms of political ambition; he has presented an exhaustive typology. Chapter Two presented a mentality of rule as self-sacrifice. Chapter Three presented a mentality of rule as exploitation, especially an exploitation which uses piety as a tool for instilling politically necessary virtues. Chapter Four presented – as contrasted to the ideal of self-sacrifice – the Socratic mentality of rule as household management, more chore-like than exalted. Chapters Five and Six presented erotic and exalted mentalities of rule: Periclean mutual erotic devotion to the fatherland, and Glauconian erotic devotion to an ideal of oneself. Finally, Chapter Seven presented a mentality of rule as friendship. The models presented in Chapters Two, Five, and Six seem to depend upon a ruler viewing his own activity as somehow exalted. The models presented in Chapters Two, Four, and Five involve a ruler viewing his own activity as primarily directed toward the good of someone or something else, as opposed to viewing his activity as self-interested. To risk a gimmick for the sake of clarity, we may summarize this typology in visual form:

	Rule as Self-interested	Rule as Other-directed
Rule as Exalted	Glaucon	Pericles Nicomachides General
Rule as non-Exalted	Cavalry Commander Charmides	Household Manager (invented by Socrates)

But a question must arise: Can this typology of ruling mentalities yet be considered complete or satisfactory? According to Socrates, those who think that there is nothing divine in the fundamental question of statesmanship are crazy (III.1.8-9). It is for that reason that the attractiveness or tenability of each model of rule can only be determined through a close analysis of Socrates' conversation with one more ambitious youth: Euthydemus.

Chapter Three: Book IV

Three (or Four?) Natures of Young Men (4.1)

Book IV consists of eight chapters: an introduction; a chapter about justice; a chapter about the gods; a chapter about the just as the lawful; a chapter about continence and the noble; a chapter about piety, law, and courage; a chapter about natural science; and a final chapter about the death of Socrates. Chapters Two, Three, Five, and Six present dialogues with an unpromising, beautiful, and ambitious youth named Euthydemus.

According to the first sentence of Book IV's introductory chapter, young men were magnetically drawn to Socrates because he was visibly beneficial to his companions "in every matter and in every manner (πάντα τρόπον)" (IV.1.1). He was beneficial to different types in different manners (cf. IV.1.3). He fell in love, not with the physically beautiful, but with those possessing good natures, "whose souls were naturally well formed for virtue" (IV.1.2). These were the naturally quick-witted and intellectual types; they loved learning (μαθημάτων) and were drawn to noble private lives. Through education (παιδευθέντας) – by Socrates? by the city? – these natures "would not only be happy themselves and nobly manage their own households but they would also be able to make other human beings as well as cities happy" (IV.1.2).

Socrates approached in a quite different manner a second type: the haughty ones. These types "thought they were by nature good" and "were contemptuous of learning."

Socrates taught them that "the natures opinion holds as best are most in need of education," analogizing them to high-spirited horses who must be broken in order to become useful and best (for their owners, or for the city) and aggressive dogs who must be nobly reared in order to become useful. Similarly (ὁμοίως), the best natures among human beings are "most robust in their souls" (IV.2.4) and capable of the greatest harms and the greatest benefits.

A final class, the money-lovers, Socrates simply insulted. These had little philosophic promise, having accepted so easily a wholly conventional measure of personal worth. Only insults – "simpleton," "foolish" – could pry apart their conflation of the possession of money with the possession of honor, virtue, and happiness. But even these, therefore, would seem to have a deep concern for virtue, reputation, and nobility. The money-lovers seem to assume, as Glaucon did, that honor *must* be a symptom of underlying virtue – even if that honor is truly attained through ostentatious wealth alone. They seem to seek money as a means to honor, and honor as a means to virtue, dignity, and the confirmation of their own worth – a confirmation which may in turn promise even greater future rewards. Riches seem to suffice for them in accomplishing "whatever they wish" (IV.2.5).

The Best Natures

But upon closer examination, this clear-cut, three-fold typology of souls seems to become more ambiguous, more obscure, more complex. Is it really the case that the haughty natures described in section three are equivalent to the best natures described in

section four? The latter are called "similar," as if merely being analogized to the horses and dogs in Socrates' lecture to the haughty types. But this ostensible conflation is in fact misleading. They are called similar precisely because they are not the same.

The haughty types only *think* they are by nature good; they are the natures *opinion* holds to be best (IV.1.3). But the natures described in section four are *in fact* "the best natures, who are most robust/powerful (ἐρρωμενεστάτους) in their souls and most able to accomplish (ἐξεργαστικωτάτους) whatever they attempt" (IV.2.4). These types possess natural virtue to a superlative degree. The haughty types, if they are not broken or nobly reared, may, like unbroken horses or dogs, "become mediocre/extremely common" (φαυλοτάτους) or useless. On the other hand, the truly best natures, without education and learning, "become worst and most harmful," and "since they are grand and impetuous they are hard to restrain and hard to turn back, which is why the bad things they do are very many and very great" (IV.1.4). The haughty are at risk of mediocrity; the best are a risk to the world. The haughty natures, contemptuous of learning, must receive education (παιδείας). But the *best* natures must receive not merely education but "learning" – mentioned twice in this section (μαθόντας, ἀμαθεῖς). The difference between education and learning is left unclear. Socrates makes no mention of the useful, the noble, or the city's benefit in the discussion of the truly best natures.

The Haze of the Socratic Search

So where are the best natures to be found? If they are, as they now appear to be, a special subset, do they emerge from among the haughty natures, or from among the good?

The ambiguity in this chapter might reflect a difficulty or haziness in Socrates' search, or rather in the Socratic search, for the best natures themselves. If the very best natures were not merely a subset of the intellectual group, but rather combined the genius of the intellectual types with the haughty grandeur of the ambitious, they might, initially, be somewhat difficult to distinguish from the latter. If true, this would make Socratic political philosophy – understood here as the political effort of philosophy to coax the best natures away from politics and toward the philosophic life – doubly dubious, and doubly dangerous. At first glance, was the young Plato more akin to the intellectual Timaeus, or to the robust and ambitious Alcibiades? This chapter's ambiguity, along with Alcibiades' earlier dialectical debunking of his guardian (I.2.46), might shed light on Socrates' attraction to a youth like Alcibiades.

Justice (4.2)

Chapter Two presents Socrates' initial conversation with "the beautiful Euthydemus." In the first of the chapter's nine sections, Socrates lures this quietly ambitious young man into private conversation – first by gentle and tacit mockery (IV.2.2), then by severe public humiliation (IV.2.3-7), and finally through public conversations (IV.2.8). Their long private conversation (IV.2.8-39) has seven parts: the uncovering of Euthydemus' desire for the ruling virtue (8-11), the relation between the just and the good (11-18), the relation between the unjust and the voluntary (19-20), knowledge and slavishness (21-23), self-understanding and advantage (24-30), the good (31-36), and the definition of the demos (37-39). A final narrative section describes Socrates' releasing of Euthydemus from the grip of philosophy (40).

The first and most obvious question posed by this chapter is: Why Euthydemus? Especially in the wake of Chapter One's typology of natures, this choice of interlocutor – by Socrates, and by Xenophon – seems strange. Euthydemus fits within none of the four categories mentioned; he is neither a good nature, a haughty nature, a best nature, or a money-lover. Why does the peak of the *Memorabilia* focus on conversations with such a mediocre interlocutor?

With typical urbanity Xenophon in fact prepared us, in Chapter One, for the entrance of Euthydemus: being a constant companion of Socrates was visibly choiceworthy "to one who examined with even limited/average (μετρίως) perception" (IV.1.1). Leaving behind or expanding upon Chapter One's typology of natures, Chapter Two begins: "I shall now describe how he approached those who held that they had obtained the best education and were proud on account of their wisdom" (IV.2.1). Euthydemus believed that he had already obtained wisdom; therefore he was no longer a lover of wisdom; in other words, he was not philosophic (Strauss 94, Cf. *Hiero* I.30). Even the character of his prior desire and quest for wisdom strike an odd note: he "had collected many writings of the poets and of the sophists who were held in the highest repute, and due to these held himself to be already superior to his contemporaries on account of wisdom and had great hopes of surpassing everyone in being able to speak and take action" (IV.2.1). Euthydemus always saw learning as a means to future political action. He sought out the writings of those held in highest repute – not necessarily the writings that were genuinely best. On account of these writings themselves – not necessarily on account of understanding or even reading them – he held himself to be superior in wisdom. Repeatedly, Xenophon and his Socrates emphasize that Euthydemus was always primarily focused on "collecting" (συλλέγω) rather than absorbing these writings (IV.1.1, 8, 8). He assumed that the writings themselves (IV.2.8) were as valuable as the judgments buried within them (IV.2.9) and would make him "rich in virtue" (cf. I.6.14 with Strauss 29).

Despite his apparent interest in wisdom, Euthydemus proves to be passive and slow-witted (IV.2.6, 10). Though beautiful (IV.2.1, cf. I.2.29), kind-hearted (IV.2.11, 15),

and ambitious (IV.2.1), he shows no sign of philosophic promise. He was a conventional lover of gentlemanly virtue who spent much of his time in a bridle shop (IV.2.1). Why, then, did Socrates go to the trouble of returning to that bridle shop, at least three times, with varying strategies, in order to lure Euthydemus into private conversation?

Euthydemus as a Test Case

A closer analysis of Chapter Two reveals that Euthydemus possesses several unique traits, or rather a unique combination of traits not often found in conjunction, that render him a perfect interlocutor for the questions Socrates here wants to investigate. Though he does not fit into Chapter One's typology of souls, he displays traits common to each type. He combines at least some form of the interest in learning (IV.2.2) with a mildly haughty pride (IV.2.1), along with – though he does not crave money – a money-lover's style of book collection (IV.2.8-9). In addition, he has all four of the basic motives to virtue. He desires to possess virtue (IV.2.1), to exercise it (IV.2.1), to benefit the city and other human beings through virtue (IV.1.11), and to benefit himself through rewards such as honor (IV.1.6.11). To a greater extent than any interlocutor in Book III, he combines all of these desires; his love of virtue is more complete.

Euthydemus also displays, because of his (at least nominal) commitment to wisdom, a greater openness to critical questioning. But despite this openness, he has not yet been swayed or 'infected' with philosophic ideas, because he has not understood anything he has read (IV.2.23). All along, he has viewed reading as a labor and a sacrifice (IV.2.23).

His potential openness is combined with a serious piety. His first word in the *Memorabilia* is a religious oath (IV.2.8); he has traveled to Delphi twice (IV.2.24); he becomes seriously disturbed when his ability to pray comes into question (IV.2.36). In connection with this, he has a strong faith in justice, as evidenced by his discombobulation, dismay, and despair when Socrates shakes his confidence in justice or his understanding of it (IV.2.15, 20, 23, 36, 39).

Perhaps his beauty is not unrelated to this faith. Beauty shines forth without effort – and brings about rewards – in a way that most virtues do not. It creates the kind of tight connection between virtue and happiness hoped for by Socrates' young interlocutor in Chapter One of Book III (III.1.4). It may create an assumption that this kind of reward will continue, without great effort, and that all virtues are like this – naturally possessed, easy, and necessarily rewarded. This would go some way in explaining the strange assumption of ambitious Socratic interlocutors that they need not practice or learn the political things in order to become exalted political figures (IV.2.2, 6, Cf. Plato's *Alcibiades* 105b, 109d). Beauty persuades that perfection is possessed or possible. The tendency of beauty to foster great hopes, great ambitions, and a strong faith in justice might explain, to some extent, the fact that Socrates was interested in physically beautiful youths despite Xenophon's claim to the contrary (IV.1.2, cf. *Alcibiades* 104a and *Charmides* 154b-c).

Finally, Euthydemus combines superlative ambition with superlative mediocrity. This might in fact be part of his appeal as an interlocutor. If Socrates seeks to investigate certain opinions about justice, there is some chance that his testing of Euthydemus (IV.2.26) may result not in a benefit to the youth but in his corruption. It would be

dangerous to undertake such an investigation with one of the promising and powerful natures (IV.1.3-4). Much more safely can a youth like Euthydemus be involved.

Euthydemus, then, presents a unique combination of prideful hope for virtue and humility, openness and piety, ambition and mediocrity. His soul is a spectrum of common traits not often found in a single place. He is, in a way, an everyman, extraordinarily average, the perfect interlocutor for the set of questions Socrates seeks to raise and answer here. To those questions we must turn.

Revealing the Ambitions of Euthydemus

To begin their private conversation, Socrates asks Euthydemus if he has really collected many of the writings of men said to have been wise. Euthydemus has; in fact, he is still collecting them, and will continue to acquire as many as he can. Socrates then exalts Euthydemus, puffing him up with pride. He guesses that Euthydemus seeks virtue, rather than merely honor and reputation, through acquiring these writings; he observes that Euthydemus is "pleased at this praise" (IV.2.9), which confirms his hypothesis.

Socrates asks in what pursuit Euthydemus seeks to become good when he gathers (συλλέγεις) these writings. Out of uncertainty or modesty, Euthydemus is silent. Socrates suggests five arts: does Euthydemus seek to become a physician, a builder, a geometer, an astronomer, a rhapsode of Homer's great verses? He seeks to be none of these. Euthydemus is not inclined to theoretical investigations. And yet he is contemptuous of rhapsodes as simpletons, perhaps because they lack the ability to give an account of the words they recite.

Socrates guesses, and Euthydemus emphatically agrees, that his desire is for "that virtue through which human beings become statesmen, fit to manage households, competent to rule, and beneficial to other human beings as well as themselves" (IV.2.11-12). Euthydemus understands, intuitively, the unity of this virtue. Statesmanship is advantageous to the statesman (cf. I.1.8). The same virtue provides benefits to others and also provides benefits, in the highest or most important sense, to oneself. Socrates calls this virtue "the noblest virtue and greatest art, for it belongs to kings and is called kingly" (IV.2.11). The reference to kings, along with the preceding reference to Homer, calls to mind Socrates' one-sided conversation with the general (III.2). The noblest virtue is simultaneously the greatest art; this virtue is equivalent to knowledge in the highest sense. Is this art knowable by human beings, or is it somehow divine (I.1.8-9, IV.8.10)?

What is Justice?

Socrates turns the conversation to justice. Has Euthydemus considered, he asks, whether it is possible to be good (rather than noble) at the kingly art, without being just? Euthydemus has in fact considered this, and responds that "it is not possible to be a good citizen without justice" (IV.2.11). A ruler, then, must be just – but Euthydemus' response can be understood in two ways. Either the ruler must *transcend* the citizenry, and thus must possess all of the citizens' virtues (including justice) and more; or, the ruler himself *remains* one of the citizens – and a good citizen – and thus must possess a good citizen's virtues. It is very possible that Euthydemus holds both of these positions (cf. III.4). In any

event, Euthydemus does not for a moment think that a good ruler would transcend the political community to the point of transcending justice itself.

Socrates asks Euthydemus if he has achieved justice. He skips over defining justice; Euthydemus shows no inclination to define it. Euthydemus thinks, "at least, that [he] would appear no less just than anyone" (IV.2.12). His conception of justice, then, seems to be egalitarian. All good citizens are equally just, perhaps because they all abide by the law. But if justice as lawfulness is fundamentally egalitarian, and all possess it, how is it exalted?

Next, Socrates employs a strange analogy. "Just as builders are able to display their own works, would those who are just…" — here one would expect Socrates to ask if those who are just are able to display their own works. This analogical question would put a premium on just *action* over (or, as a proof or cause of) just *character*, on deed over disposition. But Socrates, instead of following his own analogy to its logical conclusion, shifts mid-sentence: "Just as builders are able to display their own works, would those who are just be able to *explain* theirs?" (IV.2.12). The emphasis shifts, mid-sentence, from deed to disposition, or at least from displayable action to articulable speech. Socrates turns the focus to being able to give an account of one's works, rather than simply visibly performing just deeds or "appear[ing] no less just than anyone" (IV.2.12). But what are the works of the just, which the just must be able to explain?

Euthydemus finds Socrates' suggestion – that he might not be able to explain the works of justice – strange and even silly. Of *course* he can explain the works of justice. He will, in a moment, make it clear that only Socrates, not he himself, finds it necessary to write down the just and the unjust works: "If, in *your* opinion, we have some need of

this in addition, do it" (IV.2.13). Euthydemus finds this whole process of articulating or verbally categorizing the works of justice childish, not because it is absurd but because it is so obviously easy. In contemporary terms, Euthydemus might be called a moral intuitionist. Everyone knows, in his heart, what justice is. And yet he does not see his intuition as simply an emotion. His own faith in the intuition is predicated upon the opinion that the intuition itself is rational, that it embodies or results from a rationally coherent account which could, if desired, be articulated. The intuition, he feels, is not a mere feeling or 'hunch.' It is not a matter of groundless faith, but embodies what is truly, and reasonably, right and good.

Euthydemus makes a mild attempt, however, to shift the conversation away from the works of justice and toward the works of injustice: "By Zeus, for my part, I can explain also [the works of] injustice, since it is possible every day to see and to hear not a few such things" (IV.2.12). He seeks to shift away from a positive conception of justice which requires works and the articulation of the reasons behind them, and back toward the negative, egalitarian, and deed-oriented conception of justice with which he began. We see also, with this comment, how Euthydemus could see justice as both negatively-oriented (and egalitarian) and also exalted. Not *all* people are in fact equally just or lawful; he considers himself superior to those who are unjust; the unjust or unlawful are blameworthy and beneath him.

The Asterisk of International Relations

Having written a 'J' for justice and an 'I' for injustice in the dirt of the bridle shop's floor, Socrates questions Euthydemus about a series of actions: under which

column should each action be put? He follows, then, Euthydemus' focus on visible deeds, his principle of eliminating any neutral zone between just and unjust,[19] and, it turns out, his focus on the unjust rather than the just. Before asking how the actions of lying and deceiving should be categorized, Socrates asks whether they exist (cf. *Lesser Hippias* 369b). Both of these exist, according to Euthydemus, and should be put under injustice. Doing mischief and enslaving are also unjust. His intuition tells him that it would be "terrible" if any of these actions were just, or if he and Socrates came to see them that way.

But, as it turns out, Euthydemus already sees them that way. When Socrates mentions an elected general's action of enslaving "an unjust and hostile city," Euthydemus says that this action would not, in fact, be unjust. Not only would it not be unjust, but it would be positively just (IV.2.15). Perhaps, by calling this action just, Euthydemus is simply bowing, reluctantly, to the policy of admitting no neutral actions, i.e. to the dichotomy set before him. All actions must be either just or unjust; therefore, what is not unjust must be just.

But his responses are not reluctant but enthusiastic. When Socrates mentions the use of deception against a wartime enemy, Euthydemus emphatically claims – without being prompted – that this action is positively just. The pursuit of the city's good or the common good, then, is an aspect of justice that overrides justice as lawfulness. This precedence of the common good is revealed by the realm of international relations.

---

[19] If there is in fact a neutral zone between the unjust and the just, that neutral zone must at times be defined by the city as just and praiseworthy (to exalt simple lawfulness), and at times as unjust and blameworthy (to spur citizens to go 'beyond the call of duty'). Cf. *Laws* 644e with 878b, 881b-c, 914a, and 921d-e.

Euthydemus' own ambition – which Socrates evokes by calling the agent in this thought experiment an elected general – points beyond justice as lawfulness.

Socrates then mentions a third action: stealing and seizing an enemy's belongings. Once again, Euthydemus emphatically agrees that this is just. This action is new – not only because it had not been mentioned in their prior list, but also because it may represent an expansion of the principle being implicitly laid down. It is not clear that stealing and seizing an enemy's belongings is necessarily intended to serve the common good of the city. If it is only for the good of the army, or only for the good of the elected general himself, is it still just? Euthydemus expresses no qualms. In war, does the pursuit of one's own good know no lawful bounds? If lawfulness disappears in the absence of an overarching structure of enforcement, what is the status of lawfulness within the city?

Here Euthydemus establishes a new principle. He had thought Socrates had "asked about these things with regard to one's friends alone" (IV.2.15). Categorical prohibitions do apply, according to his new principle, but only to friends. And yet his new formulation is striking, for two reasons. First, Socrates had pointed Euthydemus' attention to war between cities; we might expect, then, Euthydemus to say that justice as lawfulness applies only to *allies*. But he says, instead, that it applies only to *friends*. This leaves it as an open question whether categorical prohibitions might be justly ignored even within the city, in actions taken against domestic or personal enemies. But, more importantly, his formulation is striking for a second reason. Socrates had not merely called the enemy city unfriendly, but rather "*unjust* and hostile" (IV.2.15). But Euthydemus has picked out only one part of that formulation. It is possible that he is simply conflating those who are friends with those who are just (and those who are

enemies with those who are unjust). In that case, he is simply using the word 'friends' as shorthand for those who are both friends and just. But it is also possible that his choice displays a fundamental yet subconscious preference: perhaps friendship is in some way closer to Euthydemus' heart than is justice as lawfulness, or rather becoming its enforcer. Perhaps this is because being helpful and lawful with friends aligns more closely with his self-interest or natural affection than does a lawfulness based on respecting or enforcing justice in the abstract, independent of personal ties. At any rate, his understanding of justice as lawfulness is altered or refined not by the standard of justice itself but by the standard of friendship.

Categorical prohibitions apply, then, but only with friends. Lying to enemies is just, but lying to friends is unjust: "to these at least one should be as straightforward as possible" (IV.2.16). And yet the ambiguity in Socrates' phrase "as straightforward as possible" already points to the next line of argument.

The Asterisk of the Good

Socrates now offers three examples which disprove Euthydemus' claim that, with friends, justice means obeying categorical prohibitions on certain actions. It is not unjust, but rather positively just, for a general to lie to his troops in order to cheer them up. It is just for a father to deceive his son into taking medicine which will make him healthy. It is just, by Zeus, for a friend to steal his friend's sword in order to prevent his suicide (IV.2.17). The example of the general establishes the principle that in war, it is just to abandon what is lawful, even with friends, in an attempt to seek the common good or the

army's good. The general's good intent is emphasized; no mention is made of his success in seeking the common good. The example of the father who deceives his son establishes the principle that even in peacetime, the intent to help friends by deceiving them, if paired with success in that attempt, is just. The example of the friend who prevents his friend's suicide combines the circumstances of peace with the mere intent to do good (rather than success in that effort): in peacetime, it is just to steal from a friend in an attempt to help him.

Euthydemus began with an intuition that justice meant lawfulness. Justice as lawfulness makes a demand that—and indeed, part of its dignity or nobility lies in its demand that—one must obey the written or unwritten laws always, i.e. categorically: even or especially at the sacrifice of what seems good. But now, under the pressure of Socratic dialectics, he has almost immediately moved to the opposite pole. When faced with a clear choice between the lawful and the good, the law – according to Euthydemus' new intuition – must bow. It must bow not only to the common good of the community but also to the good of family members and friends. What can prevent this precedence of the good from extending even further? What prevents, for instance, a person's calling it just even to sacrifice lawfulness in pursuit of his *own* good? It seems that Euthydemus' intuitions – that justice means obeying categorical prohibitions, and that justice must be good – are in contradiction with each other. If he always believed implicitly that lawfulness would in every case result in the good, or even in his own good, we are left to wonder what was the basis for that confidence.

In response to the examples of the general, the father, and the friend, Euthydemus, discombobulated, "change[s] where [he] put the things mentioned, if it's permitted"

(IV.2.18). This statement is unclear, but it seems to mean that, now, *any* action could go in *either* the column of justice *or* the column of injustice. Any action could be either just or unjust depending on the relevant circumstances; that is, depending on what is good. But is this new principle – that the good must override the lawful – a mere modification of justice as lawfulness, or in fact its destruction? Socrates says that modifying the placement of the things mentioned must be permitted, "much more than to put them incorrectly." Even the sacredness or fixed character of what is lawful, according to Socrates, must bow to the search for the truth. But if the good must override the lawful, does justice give any advice regarding *whose* good must be pursued? By what principle or law could this question be decided, if the principled nature of justice is the very thing in question or in need of being transcended?[20]

Voluntary Injustice

Socrates next asks Euthydemus: "who is more unjust among those who deceive their friends so as to harm them: the one who does so willingly or unwillingly?" Though he is no longer sure of his own answers, Euthydemus responds, naturally, that "the one who lies willingly is more unjust" (IV.2.19). Perhaps even unwilling deception may be called unjust, but injustice in the fullest sense must be willed – that is, it must be knowingly and intentionally chosen; this is the city's, and the citizen's, understanding of injustice.

[20] Perhaps justice, at this point in the conversation, has come to mean simply helping friends and harming enemies (cf. Strauss 97); Socrates does not, as he does with Polemarchus in the *Republic*, delve into the problematically amoral nature of this principle.

Next, Socrates learns from Euthydemus that, in his own opinion, there is "learning and understanding/scientific knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of the just, in the same way there is of writing" (IV.2.20). And yet, as Socrates reminds him, those who are willingly bad at writing are understood to be *more* skilled in the art of writing than those who write badly *un*willingly. Therefore, if justice too is an art, the man who is willingly unjust must understand the art of justice better. If justice is a matter of understanding, he must in fact be more just than the man who is unwillingly unjust, who does not understand justice (IV.2.20; cf. *Lesser Hippias* 373c-376a).

Two flaws appear in this argument. First, it is left ambiguous in what sense the unwillingly unjust man is unwilling. It is not clear that the unwillingly unjust man does, as Euthydemus agrees that he does, fail to understand justice itself. Perhaps he merely fails to understand the circumstances at hand when he acts. One may understand, for instance, that it is unjust to poison a friend, yet fail to understand that the meatloaf one feeds him is poisoned. Misunderstanding – or lacking full control over – one's actions is not equivalent to misunderstanding justice.

Connected with this first flaw, Socrates here abstracts from intent. Being unjust in the fullest sense means having an unjust *intention*. Therefore the knowingly unjust man is unjust, or 'bad at justice,' in a way that that the intentionally bad runner is not bad at running. Justice is different from the other arts in that one's being good at the art of justice depends largely on one's never for a moment *intending* to do badly at the art.

But this apparent flaw in the argument points to a deeper problem. Socrates may in fact be justified in abstracting from intent, given that justice is a peculiar art: if justice is an art, it is the one art whose proper performance is *always* and *necessarily* good. A

knower of the art of running may at times find it good to run poorly on purpose. But how could a knower of the art of justice – if knowing the art of justice means, most crucially, knowing that being just is *always* good for the just in the most important sense, i.e. good for their souls – ever intentionally act unjustly? If the virtue of justice is simply knowledge or prudence, then a just intent will be a mere byproduct of, and inseparable from, that knowledge; if knowledge is established, intent need not be explicitly considered. But if justice is necessarily good for the just actor, then anyone who fails to be just necessarily misunderstood justice in the crucial sense and is therefore not culpable for his injustice. Unjust actions, then, are never intentional (i.e., knowing), but are rather the result of ignorance or insanity. But if this is the case, how can we make sense of praise and blame, reward and punishment?

It seems that, to make sense of Euthydemus' initial intuition that willingly (and knowingly) unjust men not only exist but are especially blameworthy, we must posit a second intuition: Euthydemus simultaneously views justice *not* as a learnable art, nor as good for the just, but as a sacrifice. Only this intuition, that justice is bad for the just, can make sense of the citizen's blame (rather than pity) of those who are unjust, his feeling that the unjust 'get away with something' and deserve 'payback,' and his sentiment that the just deserve not merely congratulation but reward (e.g. honor) as a recompense for their noble sacrifice.

Then is justice bad for the just, or good? Euthydemus can be content with neither answer in isolation from the other; it seems that his intuitions again contradict each other. To call just action simply good for the just could not match up with his experience of the world or with the city's activities of justly punishing and honoring; but to call it simply

bad could not match up with his hopes, his experience of the degraded dispositions of the unjust, or the city's rhetoric. He began with the opinion that the unjust were willingly unjust and thus blameworthy, but Socrates – thinking through Euthydemus' *own* opinion that justice is good – showed him that a knower of justice would never be unjust. If Euthydemus, as a representative citizen, simultaneously views justice as bad and as good for the just, then it seems the tension within the ruling virtue (cf. III.2) may in fact be a tension within virtue, or at least political virtue, as such.

Knowledge

Socrates next asks Euthydemus his opinion of those who contradict themselves. Such people, Euthydemus understands, must be ignorant (IV.2.21). Is slavishness, Socrates asks, due to knowledge or due to ignorance? Euthydemus, perhaps because of his admiration of philosophy, does not question this dichotomy or attempt to substitute a new one (such as power and impotence, or freedom and coercion); the slavish are slavish due to ignorance.

Socrates then mentions three arts: Is slavishness the result of ignorance in smithing, in building, in shoemaking? With the central reference to the builder's art, Socrates reminds us how far he and Euthydemus have moved from a perspective which would claim that justice means the visible display of just works (IV.2.12); now they seem to agree that justice must be a form of knowledge or wisdom. The slavish are slavish due to ignorance of the noble, good, and just things (IV.2.22). Euthydemus says that this is true, in *his* opinion. The ordinary citizen, then, has a philosophic impulse, in that he

desires not simply to act justly, nor merely to possess *intuitions* about the noble, the good, and the just, but to possess rational and articulable knowledge of them. Because Euthydemus' intuitions have been shown to be contradictory (he viewed law as both sacred and as subservient to the good, and he viewed injustice as both bad for the unjust and as blameworthy), he has lost faith in them; 'intuitionism' was never fully satisfactory to him, except when paired with the tacit assumption that his intuitions were rational and represented real knowledge. As Socrates will later claim in reference to the good, perhaps Euthydemus "didn't examine these things due to [his] excessive trust that [he] knew them" (IV.2.36).

Having been shown his own ignorance regarding the most important things, and thus his slavishness, Euthydemus cries out in despair to the gods. His piety, it seems, is intact. He had thought that in pursuing philosophy he would "be educated to the highest degree in what befits a man yearning for gentlemanliness (nobility and goodness)"; now he is dispirited that his previous "pains" or labors have been worthless. It seems that Euthydemus always viewed philosophic activity as a means or foundation for the pursuit of virtue, not as virtuous in itself, nor inherently productive of virtue. Study he viewed as a sacrifice, as a laborious or painful exercise. Now he despairs, for he knows of no other road he might travel "to become better" (IV.2.23).

Self-Knowledge and Happiness

Without warning or explanation, Socrates asks Euthydemus if he has ever gone to the shrine at Delphi, whose inscription reads 'know thyself.' Here Socrates grounds an

exhortation to self-knowledge in an appeal to religion. Euthydemus' piety, though perhaps shaken, appears again to be intact; he swears by Zeus and does not question Socrates' appeal. He responds that, despite the shrine's exhortation, he did not attempt to examine who he was because he thought that he already knew. Socrates, however, informs him that true self-knowledge is neither trivial nor easy to obtain. One with true self-knowledge, according to Socrates' statement, is "one who has examined himself as to how he is with regard to the use to which human beings are put and who knows his capacity" (IV.2.25). But Euthydemus' opinion is that "one who doesn't know his capacity is ignorant of himself." Euthydemus, then, chooses to focus on capacity as most important, rather than measuring himself according to "the use to which human beings are put"; though unphilosophic, he again tests positive for an inclination toward the philosophic view.

Socrates next connects self-knowledge to a form of perfect and perhaps Machiavellian happiness. Those who attain self-knowledge can "procure what they need and do well," and "through the use of other [human beings] procure the good things and guard against the bad ones" (IV.2.26); they will be trusted and attain great political power instead of punishment and disgrace. Prudent men, like cities, must concern themselves with fighting winnable battles, not just ones (IV.2.29). The promise of this great and amoral happiness is quite appealing to Euthydemus, perhaps because his faith in justice or lawfulness has been so shaken. He pleads with Socrates to show him the starting point for this glorious self-knowledge to which all of his hopes and ambitions have been tethered (IV.2.30).

The Good

The starting point for self-knowledge, according to Socrates, is knowledge of what is good. Euthydemus believes he knows this, at least. If he did not, he would be "more common even than slaves" (IV.2.31). He immediately claims that health, and the causes of health, are good; sickness, and the causes of sickness, are bad. But Socrates shows him that health may cause bad things, and that sickness may cause good things. Health is not an absolute but only a conditional good. Even the supposedly mighty can fall victim to chance, harmed or killed by their strength.

Wisdom, Euthydemus next claims, must be "indisputably good." But Socrates shows him that wisdom, too, can lead to misery. Chance rules all (cf. I.1.8); nothing is predictable or secure; existence is fundamentally terrifying. Wisdom, like health, is only a conditional good.

Being happy, Euthydemus counters, is the least debatable good. Socrates does not dispute this, but 'happiness' must be given content. If happiness is to include "beauty, strength, riches, reputation, or anything else of the sort," then it too will be rendered conditionally good. Euthydemus emphatically claims that these attributes must be included. Socrates then shows that all four of these – and political power itself, which he had puffed up as such a glorious good – do not equal or bring perfect happiness; they too are only conditional goods.

Here Euthydemus despairs and comes out with a strange exclamation: "And yet, if I do not speak correctly even when I praise being happy, I agree that I do not know even what one should pray to the gods for" (IV.2.36). But Socrates had not been speaking

of the gods. This non sequitur must be understood in conjunction with the chapter which comes next, Chapter Three, in which Socrates finds it necessary to make Euthydemus "moderate concerning the gods" (IV.3.2) – and even to urge him that "one should not have contempt for the things that are unseen," such as the gods (IV.3.14). It seems that, although Euthydemus began with a firm piety, something in Chapter Two's conversation about the just and the good came to shake his faith; this seems to be the moment at which his faith was shaken. The inquiry into the contradictions within his understanding of justice may have been a necessary preparation for this response. But it seems that his faith is acutely damaged only when Socrates proves – or seems to Euthydemus to prove – that perfect happiness is impossible. It is at this moment that his confidence in the possibility or desirability of contact with the gods – or even his faith in their very existence – seems to falter. This response, then, would point Socrates toward a hypothesis that revelation or contact with the gods can exist without the belief that one's understanding of justice is at all coherent (cf. Martin Luther on grace), that such contact may be the result of a hope, and that piety may be, at its core, self-interested. That conclusion, if true, would be extremely problematic politically: if law has been shown to be theoretically and practically fragile, piety would become all the more necessary to restrain selfishness. But if piety itself were founded upon self-interest, its dependability as a check on selfishness would become questionable.

The Demos

Finally, Socrates asks Euthydemus whether – given his ambition to preside over a democratically ruled city – he can define the 'demos.' He defines it as the poor; and yet

poverty, by his own definition, is best defined not in absolute terms but as relative to need. Even a tyrant, if his wealth fails to match his wild needs, is in fact poor and thus a member of the demos (IV.2.39).

Here Socrates, in preparation for the next chapter, attempts to make Euthydemus less needy for external goods; even tyrants, if they have needy souls, are neither happier nor more exalted than the poor. Such a realization should move Euthydemus away from a focus on visible success and toward a focus on his own disposition, which he can more effectively control. Perhaps Euthydemus' fervid ambition can be channeled inward, toward the creation of a virtuous and happy soul.

But Euthydemus is too caught up in conventional understandings of worth to abandon them. Rather than accept this argument regarding tyrannical poverty, he instead assumes that he has blundered in the argument and is worthless. Tyrants cannot have anything in common with the demos (but cf. I.2.45 and Strauss 100).

The Release

Xenophon tells us that Euthydemus left this seven-part conversation altogether dispirited (ἀθύμως), "having contempt for himself and holding that he was really a slave" (IV.2.39). Socrates put many others into this state (but cf. IV.8.11) who never returned to speak with him. But Euthydemus did return and began to shadow Socrates constantly, even imitating some of his pursuits. And yet Socrates, upon seeing his condition, "disturbed him as little as possible and explained in the most simple and clear manner what he held he should know and what he held best for him to pursue" (IV.2.40).

Socrates did not hold, then, that it was best for Euthydemus to pursue a Socratic life; when he began to imitate Socrates, then it became necessary to explain to him what was best for him to pursue. Euthydemus was released, by Socrates, from philosophy. The chapter's concluding sentence, quoted above, prepares us for the next chapter's unphilosophic or quasi-philosophic character.[21]

[21] Chapter Three's quasi-philosophic or rhetorical character is confirmed by the opening sentence of Chapter Four, which reads: "Furthermore, he did not hide the judgment he had concerning justice, at any rate (γε), but showed it even in deed…" (IV.4.1).

The Reconstruction of Piety (4.3)

Chapter Three depicts Socrates' effort to reconstruct or modify the piety of Euthydemus. It becomes clear that Euthydemus' piety has always been a piety of neediness. Though he prays to the gods for many things (IV.2.36), it has "never once occurred to [him]" that the gods already "attentively furnish human beings with what they need" (IV.3.3). Xenophon's *Memorabilia* seems to indicate that piety in human beings takes two fundamental forms: a piety of need, and a piety of gratitude. Socrates seeks in this chapter to move Euthydemus from the former to the latter. To accomplish this, Socrates lists with gusto the good things provided to human beings by the gods, or by nature: light, night, stars, the moon, the seasons which provide sustenance, water, fire, the kindly sun, the gradual nature of seasonal change, the provision of herbivorous animals, and the gifts of perception and explanation.

Problems, however, emerge. Euthydemus is told by Socrates to be grateful not only for the gods' provision of light, without which we could not see, but also for their provision of night, "a most noble resting time" (IV.3.3). But if darkness were the natural status quo before the gods provided light, why should we thank them for darkness? Are we simply thanking them simply for not altering (or for restoring) it? Similarly, we are told to be grateful not only for the gods' provision of abundant, useful, and delightful

sustenance from the earth (IV.3.5), but also for their provision of water, which "when mixed with all that sustains us, makes these things easier to digest and more beneficial as well as more pleasant" (IV.3.6). Could not the gods have made our food easy to digest as well as supremely beneficial and pleasant in the first place? An optimistically selective attention is perhaps healthy and conducive to happiness. But a great deal of piety here seems to consist in thanking and praising the gods for problems they themselves created, or could have avoided.

Fire presents us with a second problem. Socrates mentions "the procuring for us also of fire, an ally against cold, an ally against darkness, a coworker in every art and for all things that human beings equip themselves with for their benefit" (IV.3.7). But it is not made clear that fire was a gift of the gods; fire seems, rather, the result and epitome of human agency or art, a human response to *flaws* in an only half-hospitable natural world, which is often cold and dark. Why was art so necessary, if the gods were so kind in crafting nature? Socrates continues: "in sum, without fire, human beings equip themselves with nothing worth mentioning of the things useful for life" (IV.3.7). Here Socrates points – though quietly – to the uselessness or harshness of nature in the absence of human agency and artifice (cf. John Locke, *Second Treatise* §42-43).

Certain aspects of human existence are, in this chapter, entirely ignored. A comparison with Socrates' earlier exhortation to piety (I.4.2) is instructive. "The beautiful Euthydemus" finds a message about the generosity of nature more plausible than did "Aristodemus, nicknamed 'the Small' " (I.4.2). But Aristodemus' skepticism was also due to a difference in the message. During the earlier exhortation, Socrates mentioned

death and Aristodemus immediately stopped speaking of divine love for human beings (I.4.7). Here, death is never mentioned.

The discussion of animals, too, is problematic. Socrates claims that animals "are born and sustained for the sake of human beings" (IV.3.10). And yet he points to the necessity of domesticating and breaking in animals to make them useful. He also dwells only on "grazing animals"; carnivores are never mentioned.

The Socratic Experiment

But the question of animals only arises because of an objection made by Euthydemus. He is not, in fact, a passive and obliging recipient of Socrates' new form of piety. Socrates' list of natural blessings has led him to examine "whether the gods have any other work than serving (θεραπεύειν) human beings. The only thing holding me back is that the other animals too participate in these things" (IV.3.9). Euthydemus' complaint seems to be twofold: it is either unthinkable, or unsatisfying, that the gods would serve not only human beings but animals. It is unthinkable because animals are so obviously lowly. Gods who were truly exalted could not spend their time attending to the happiness of hogs (cf. Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed* II.11, III.12-14, 16). And yet this objection only points to a deeper problem: from the perspective of truly exalted gods, human beings would be, essentially, as lowly as animals. Why would the gods serve human beings (cf. 1.4.10)? It seems that ruling or serving gods are emphatically political, prone to the same theoretical tensions as human rulers (cf. III.4). Second, Euthydemus

may find the idea of divine aid to animals inherently unsatisfying. But to understand this dissatisfaction, we must investigate more carefully his responses in this section.

Upon close inspection, Euthydemus' responses do not remain static over the course of this chapter but in fact display a marked trajectory of waning enthusiasm. When Socrates describes the blessings of light and night, Euthydemus calls them "deserving of gratitude." The stars, moon, and sustenance, he says, "are very indicative of a love of human beings" (IV.3.5). But his enthusiasm has already peaked. The provision of water in great quantity is not indicative of love but only "forethought" (IV.3.6). Fire indicates "a surpassing love of human beings," but perhaps it is merely self-love *by* human beings; it may dawn on Euthydemus that the use of fire is, even in the traditional myths, the result of human agency. The kindliness of the sun in not allowing us to burn or freeze garners only a tepid response from Euthydemus: "these things too are altogether *like* things that happen *for the sake of* human beings" (IV.3.8). Then comes his objection and Socrates' discussion regarding animals.

But here it becomes apparent that Socrates is not merely constructing a piety of gratitude for Euthydemus' sake or for the sake of damage control. He is, in fact, simultaneously running an *experiment.* He is attempting to test Euthydemus, to see how much traction he can get, with an everyman, by introducing a new piety: a piety of this-worldly gratitude and self-sufficiency. His new religious outlook invokes no actively providential gods, but only detached designers who never interfere with nature and its necessities.

And yet Euthydemus' tepid responses indicate that he is becoming more and more dissatisfied (and finally rebellious), even as the natural blessings mount. Socrates,

attempting to restore some enthusiasm, mentions perception, which enables us to differentiate between the noble and the beneficial and to choose what is good (IV.3.11). He adds calculation of the advantageous and "the gift of explanation, through which, by teaching, we share with one another all the good things, live collectively, establish laws, and partake of political life" (IV.3.11). These laws are emphatically not created or sanctioned by the gods but by human beings. They are based on reason, not revelation.

But these blessings are not good enough. The gods, Euthydemus mildly responds, are merely "very attentive to human beings" (IV.3.12). Losing ground, Socrates concedes divination, which offers us glimpses of the future through vague signs (IV.3.12). But neither is this enough for Euthydemus. Dissatisfied, he demands a providence that is *personal*, as well as specific and clear (IV.3.12, cf. I.4.15). Socrates rambles desperately about the invisibility of the gods and their works; he attempts to retain a non-providential and detached demiurge as the cornerstone of his new theology, "the one who places together and keeps together the whole cosmos, in which all things are noble and good." This demiurge "does unerring service," but he does so "more quickly than thought," rendering prayer or contact with him unnecessary; "while seen to be doing the greatest things," he (or it) is "unseen by us as he manages (οἰκονομῶν) them" (IV.3.13). This household manager in the sky mirrors and embodies the Socratic outlook on politics. Neither noble nor retributive, neither actively providential nor interventionist, he is not a *ruling* god in any traditional or exalted sense.

But after Socrates' long speech about the blessings of the demiurge, the experiment definitively breaks down. Despite all of these natural goods and proofs of a kindly managerial god or gods, Euthydemus is not happy. He is not, as one might expect,

cheerfully grateful, but rather *dispirited* or *hopeless* (ἀθυμῶ). These gifts are not enough for him. He seeks to "repay the gods' benefactions with the gratitude they deserve" (IV.3.15). Gratitude is essential to being just (II.2.2); Euthydemus seeks to become just, restore his good standing with the gods, and perhaps become worthy of even greater goods than previously received. The goods received thus far are not enough. The construction of a this-worldly piety based on natural blessings has failed.

It is at this precise moment – when this world has proven to be insufficient for Euthydemus – that Socrates abruptly, and without warning, allows *law* to enter. He advises Euthydemus not to be dispirited, for it is common knowledge that one may gratify the gods through obeying the law of the city. Here Socrates opens the floodgates of conventional, providential piety: he allows not only the law of the city to enter, but also sacrifices, nobility, visibly honoring the gods, and, through *pleasing* the gods, "hoping for the greatest goods (τά μέγιστα ἀγαθά)" (IV.3.17). Suddenly the gods demand lawfulness, watch carefully over our actions, and promise to respond to our lawfulness by satisfying our most naturally unsatisfiable longings. It would not be moderate, Socrates says, "for someone to hope for more from others than from those able to benefit in the most important things/to the greatest extent, nor would it be moderate to hope for this other than if one would please them. And how would he please them more than if he obeyed them in the highest degree?" (IV.3.17). Socrates has proven to himself that this world, in its natural state, leaves an average (or even a naturally gifted) man dissatisfied, or even hopeless. At this point he allows lawfulness and all its associated hopes to enter. Without them, men and societies would be less happy and less robust. If Euthydemus

may be taken as representative, then it would seem that a this-worldly piety of gratitude for nature as it is can never be sufficient or satisfactory for mortal men.

The political implications of Socrates' failed experiment are both disheartening and heartening. First, Socrates would seem to have gathered some evidence that human beings cannot be fully satisfied through politics or on a political plane (cf. Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations* III.4). Eternal dissatisfaction with political life may imply eternal political strife. But there is also a more heartening message to be drawn from the uncovering of that dissatisfaction and the injection of law and lawfulness which immediately follows. It seems that it is precisely the void or dissatisfaction human beings feel with this world which enables law and lawfulness to get a handle on us, to take deep root in our souls and direct us —because it offers a release from that pain and a promise of the greatest of goods. Political life may become stable and healthy precisely because of our fundamental dissatisfaction with life in this world.

The Moderate and the Pious

Xenophon concludes this chapter with the claim that "by saying such things and himself doing them he rendered his companions both more pious and more moderate" (IV.3.18). As Strauss points out, this implies that piety and moderation are two different things (105). Perhaps those companions made more pious and those companions made more moderate were two different groups. Perhaps some of Socrates' companions were made more moderate by viewing Euthydemus' responses and thus abandoning their

hopes to change drastically the character of political life and the mentality of ordinary citizens.

Justice as Lawfulness (4.4)

Chapter Four presents the Socratic teaching that the just is the lawful. It is part of Xenophon's defense of Socrates that Socrates proves the just to be equivalent to the lawful to Hippias, a Sophist and a "famous or notorious despiser of the laws," rather than to Euthydemus (Strauss 108). It is very possible, however, that Euthydemus – though not mentioned here – was present for this conversation, especially given his apparent absorption of its message (IV.6.6). The chapter as a whole has seven sections: an opening narrative section which introduces two guiding problems (IV.4.1-4); Hippias' entrance and unarticulated definition of justice (5-8); Socrates' first definition of justice (9-12); Socrates' second definition of justice (12-13); Hippias' objection and Socrates' rebuttal (13-14); Socrates' defense of lawfulness as advantageous for city and individual (15-17); and the discussion of unwritten or divine law (19-25).

The Problems of Regime and Benefit

The two guiding problems of this chapter are intimated by its very first sentence: Socrates showed his judgment concerning justice even in deed, "by dealing with everyone in private in a lawful and beneficial manner; and in public by being so obedient

to rulers in what the laws command, both in the city and on campaigns, that it was thoroughly clear that he was orderly beyond the others" (IV.4.1). By mentioning them separately, Xenophon implies that the lawful and the beneficial are not the same (Strauss 107). One guiding question of the chapter, then, will be: Do the lawful and the good align (cf. IV.2)? If so, under what conditions?

This first sentence also contains the strange phrasing that Socrates was "obedient to rulers in what the laws command." Did he obey the rulers, or the laws? Does this phrase mean that the commands of the laws align with, are equivalent to, or consist merely in the commands of the rulers? Or does it mean that Socrates obeyed the rulers only insofar as their commands aligned with some higher and more legitimate law? But don't the rulers make the laws? This chapter, taken as a whole, will contain the Socratic response to what is now known as legal positivism. Its second guiding question, then, will be: What is the relation between law and regime? This question implies three more: Does law have a more solid basis than the command of a given regime? If so, what? And if not, can law and lawfulness be respected?

Socrates, it would seem, found some higher authority for law than the given regime: this opening narrative section emphasizes repeatedly his defiance before the ruling regime, in the name of the lawful. He defended the democratically-instituted laws of Athens not out of respect for the demos but even in defiance of it (IV.4.2). Likewise, he disobeyed the Thirty Tyrants when they "forbade conversing with the young;" he alone disobeyed "due to the fact that they were commanding him to do what was contrary to the laws" (IV.4.3). But we are led to wonder: what laws? Were not the only laws in place the laws of the Thirty? In fact, Socrates himself had earlier called the edicts of the

Thirty "laws," and had even inquired of them carefully (though ironically) regarding the precise content of the law so as not to "inadvertently break the law in some way" (I.2.34). Why is Socrates here so confident that law transcends regime when he earlier seemed, at least implicitly, to define law as whatever the ruling regime said it was – that is, to be a strict legal positivist? What explains Socrates' transformation from timid legal positivist to crusading moral firebrand? Even "customary things in the law court," such as flattery – which was not against the laws of Athens – were considered by Socrates to be "contrary to the laws" (IV.4.4) and thus prohibited. What laws are guiding Socrates' action? Is he committed to the spirit of the laws, or to the laws of the fatherland? How – and with what grounding – does his brand of lawfulness transcend with such magnificence the regime?

Hippias' Solution

When Hippias came to Athens, Xenophon tells us, he heard Socrates "saying to some people" that it was a wonder that one can easily find teachers of many arts, but that no one knows how or where to learn justice (IV.4.5). As Strauss points out, this is a very strange statement coming from a man about to define the just as the lawful; the laws of the city can be taught by any good citizen (Strauss 109). Hippias mocks Socrates for repeating the same things he has long been saying; Socrates confirms that accusation's truth. His claim that no one understands or can teach justice, then, is not new; he has always said this; equating the just and the lawful is highly atypical for him, or even hypocritical. Socrates mocks Hippias back, asking if he seeks novelty even at the expense of consistency, coherence, and truth (cf. IV.2.21). Hippias is consistent regarding letter

and number; but regarding justice, he does have a novel teaching or definition which will shut down all debate forever (IV.4.7).

Socrates is overjoyed at this news: "By Hera, great is the good you're saying that you have found, if jurors will cease being divided in their votes; citizens will cease contradicting one another, bringing lawsuits, and forming factions concerning the just things; the cities will cease disagreeing about the just things and going to war" (IV.4.8). A universally-accepted definition of justice promises to end all strife. But Socrates' ironic joy points to three problems in his own impending definition of justice as lawfulness.

First, the disharmony between jurors points to the fact that even law does not settle all strife; the application or applicability of the law to concrete circumstances remains a matter of dispute.

Second, the mention of war points to the problematic relation between law and international relations. If the just is the law of a city, how is one to arbitrate disputes between cities, i.e. between entire systems of law? The very presence of competing legal systems is a challenge to a definition of justice as the lawful, unless some cosmic or universal law can be discovered. If it cannot, can citizens truly view their own particular city's laws as absolute? Or will the very existence of other societies be an eternal threat to their laws and their lawfulness? If so, the only solutions would seem to be either a policy of extreme isolationism (a totally closed society) or the creation of one world government.

Third and centrally, Socrates points to the fact that the dispute between systems of law in fact occurs not only *between* cities but *within* them. In other words, 'the asterisk of the international realm' in fact applies within cities, because each city is not a monolith

but a cauldron of competing factions, each vying to be the ruling (and law-making) regime. To form "factions concerning the just things" is to aim, ideally, at the imposition of one's own laws. But if a city itself is always in a kind of state of war, how can its laws – which represent not the city but merely a part of the city, and aim not at the common good but at the good of the ruling part – be treated with any respect?

Socrates' First Definition of Justice

Hippias refuses to offer his novel account or definition of justice until Socrates offers his own. Offering a definition of justice is apparently highly atypical for Socrates, who spends most of his time refuting others. But Socrates claims that he constantly shows his opinion about justice, by deed. "Or is it not *your* opinion that one's deed is more worthy testimony than one's speech?" (IV.4.10). The trajectory of the discussion, it seems, will be tailored to or dictated by Hippias's own preferences and psychology. Because Hippias prefers deed to speech, Socrates will give a definition of justice based on deeds or the visible restraint from deeds. Socrates has never been perceived "bearing false witness or making a false accusation or casting friends or cities into civil faction or doing anything else unjust" (IV.4.11, cf. *Republic* 442e). His initial definition of justice, then, is "refraining from the unjust things." Like Euthydemus, he has a negative definition of justice (cf. IV.2.12); unlike Euthydemus, he may not view justice in this sense as exalted. His reformulation is that he thought that "not wanting to do injustice was a sufficient display of justice" (IV.4.12). It is unclear, given the lack of parallelism between the two definitions offered, whether, in Socrates' estimation, it is the visible

refraining from unjust *deeds*, or the internal lack of a *desire* to commit them (i.e. the possession of a good *disposition*) which constitutes his justice.

However, Hippias is not satisfied with this initial and perhaps truer definition of Socratic justice. He desires a more positive definition; Socrates must say not merely what the just don't do, but what they do. Allowing himself to be dictated by Hippias' dissatisfaction, Socrates offers a new definition.

Socrates' Second Definition: Justice as Lawfulness

To "please" Hippias, Socrates says that the lawful is just; he accepts Hippias' interpretation that he is claiming the just is equivalent to the lawful (IV.4.12, cf. Strauss 110). But Hippias is still confused: what law is Socrates referencing? Socrates explains that he means "the laws of a city." But this is a strange statement. What are "a city's laws" in general, or in the abstract? Aren't there only laws of particular cities, which are ruled by particular regimes?

According to Hippias, "the laws of a city" means "what the citizens agreed upon and wrote as to what one must do and refrain from" (IV.4.13). He has an eminently and exclusively democratic understanding of law; he does not seem to understand the problem of regime (cf. I.2.42-46). The laws, he says, are what "the citizens agreed upon and wrote" – but *which* citizens? Literally all of them, or only a portion?

Hippias next agrees that to engage in political life lawfully is to do what is just, and to do just deeds is equivalent to (or necessarily correlated with) *being* just. He seems

to have a great, though buried, respect for lawfulness. At last he shakes himself awake, as if momentarily put under a spell, and recalls his role as enlightened cynic.

Hippias' Rebuttal

Hippias objects to the definition of justice as lawfulness on the grounds that the laws are often changed and are thus not to be taken seriously (IV.4.14). Socrates responds that, "war, too, the cities have often begun, only to make peace again." The mockery of law and lawfulness is then equated by Socrates with the mockery of patriotic and courageous soldiers "who eagerly bring aid to their fatherlands in wars" (IV.4.14). If Hippias is to mock law, he must mock courageous soldiers as well.

This analogy between law and war is faulty. Wars are designed to end; in fact, they are most clearly understood not as ends in themselves but as means to victory and thus peace (*Laws* 628c-628e). Laws, on the other hand, are almost invariably designed not as fleeting nor as means to their own obsolescence but as enduring and reasonable means to the common good. To change or revoke a law is thus an admission that it was a bad or foolish law; but to end a war or achieve peace is not an admission that it was a bad or foolish war.

But what about unreasonable wars? Socrates' analogy, though faulty on its face, points to a deep tension in Hippias' soul. The analogy indicates that if Hippias wants to mock lawfulness, he must also be willing to mock patriotic courage in the service of foolish or unreasonable wars. Courage untethered from a noble end is ignoble. But Hippias, like any good citizen, would never fail to praise a courageous soldier, no matter

how foolish the war: "theirs not to reason why." His tacit, unconditional respect for courage goes together with – and is perhaps a form of – his even more tacit respect for lawfulness. At the mention of courage and the fatherland, Hippias swears emphatically by Zeus and denies that he would ever blame the courageous (IV.4.14).

The Advantages of Lawfulness

Socrates next outlines the advantages of law and lawfulness for cities and individuals. Cities like Sparta, which are especially obedient to the laws, live best in peace and become most powerful in war. Lawfulness goes together with concord, strength, and happiness (IV.4.15-16). But a strange chicken-and-egg problem becomes evident in this passage. It is "established law" everywhere in Greece that citizens "take an oath that they will live in concord, and everywhere they take this oath." But Socrates thinks these things come about "so that they should obey the laws." How can a pre-existing obedience to the laws create concord, which only then, in turn, creates obedience to the laws?

This minor problem points to a deeper one. Socrates seems to imply in this section that the laws are for the sake of concord, but that concord is for the sake of lawfulness. Which is it? In thinking this through, it becomes apparent that Socrates, though ostensibly very civically-minded, is making a rather odd defense of lawfulness. He is, as he seemed to promise earlier, making a defense of "the laws of *a* city"—not the laws of *his* city, or even *any* city in *particular*, but the laws of a city in the abstract. He is praising lawfulness in itself, independent and regardless of the laws' specific content.

This is in fact a quite detached and philosophic defense; it is not the defense of a lawful and engaged citizen. But what could possibly be the virtue of lawfulness *as such*, without reference to the content of the laws? The answer would seem to be concord, i.e. like-mindedness. As long as the citizens are on the same page, it is not so important what page they are on. Lawfulness itself creates a homogeneity conducive to peace and good will.

But can this be enough? If lawfulness is a mere means to concord, and concord, as Socrates here admits, creates nothing high or exalted – not agreement or good taste in choruses or music or art (IV.4.16) – but merely peace through a basic (and even vulgar) homogeneity of interests and concerns, how can lawfulness itself be exalted? But on the other hand, can concord be for the sake of lawfulness as a virtue, as an end in itself? Perhaps Socrates' convoluted depiction of the relation between law and concord is meant to mirror a jumble in the minds of ordinary committed citizens. Law (and lawfulness) cannot wholly be understood either as a mere means or as an end in itself. If it is understood a mere means, for instance to concord, it is not exalted enough to be sufficiently respectable.[22] But if it is understood as an end in itself, it is not rewarding or beneficial enough; in other words, without making reference to the good of the community – which is necessarily a good shared and determined by even the lowest common denominator – it becomes unclear even to a committed and lawful citizen exactly what the *benefit* of or *reason* for lawfulness is.

Socrates next outlines the benefits of lawfulness for a lawful individual, in the form of twelve rhetorical questions. Lawfulness is conducive to winning in law courts,

---

[22] It also becomes unclear that lawfulness as a means to the common good (through enforced homogeneity) is good for the lawful individual – especially if law or concord unjustly drags down the most gifted. Through the lawfulness of individuals, "*cities* become strongest and happiest" (IV.4.16).

being trusted, being done good deeds, and acquiring friends and allies, among other benefits. Strangely, the central pair of questions, and the final question, mention enemies, armistices, allies, and war. But was the focus not supposedly the benefit of lawfulness for an *individual*, *within* a city? Socrates seems again, by implying that a single city is not a unity but a battlefield, to point to the pressing question of regime: if one cannot find a foundation for law beyond or above the fiat of whatever particular regime is in power, then life even within a single city will remain fundamentally a state of war, a competition between different factions attempting to gain power and dictate a set of actions or foist a single way of life upon all other citizens. If a higher or more solid foundation for law cannot be found, Hippias will be right about the unseriousness of law or lawfulness, but perhaps in a deeper sense than he knew.

In addition, Socrates' series of rhetorical questions merely prove that it is usually useful to appear lawful, not that it is always good to be lawful. The question of the relation between the lawful and the good has here become pressing.

Unwritten Laws

Accordingly, Socrates moves abruptly into a discussion of unwritten laws, which turn out to be, according to Hippias, divine laws. This shift is a testament both to Socrates' partial agreement with the school of legal positivism (on a theoretical level) and his partial disagreement with it (on a practical and psychological level). Certain laws take deep root, even in a scoffer like Hippias. These laws are the same in every city and regardless of regime; their legitimacy is thus unquestionable. Because they are "the same

in every land," they must have been divinely established. "For indeed among all human beings, the first thing held as law is to revere gods" (IV.4.19). The law to revere gods establishes reverence, if not for itself, then for all subsequent divine law (cf. Strauss, *On the Minos,* in *The Roots of Political Philosophy* 68-70). Unwritten laws include honoring one's parents and avoiding incest (IV.4.20). Hippias objects that this latter law cannot be divine, because he sees that some transgress it. Socrates steers him: it is not essential that a divine law never be transgressed, but only that its transgressions never go unpunished. "Those who transgress the laws laid down by the gods pay a penalty that a human being is unable to escape in any way, as some who transgress the laws laid down by human beings escape paying the penalty, either by going unnoticed or by using violence" (IV.4.21). Enforcement is essential to law. Law in the fullest or most perfect sense must be perfectly enforced; only gods can make laws in the fullest sense. Divine or cosmic laws are not dependent on regime and are perfectly good for the lawful because they are perfectly enforced; a divine foundation for the laws solves both problems implicit in this chapter. Just as he previously established piety on natural rather than supernatural grounds, Socrates here synthesizes providentially-enforced divine law with the natural consequences resulting from forbidden actions such as incest and ingratitude. No providential intervention is necessary, because these laws, these absolutely categorical prohibitions, "themselves contain the punishments for those who transgress them" (IV.4.24). The success of Socrates' synthesis of divine providence with natural consequences, i.e. his synthesis of lawfulness with prudence, i.e. his proof that a belief in interventionist gods is unnecessary to healthy family, social, and political life, is evident

in his discussion of the natural enforcement of the categorical prohibition of incest between brothers and sisters.

4.5: Continence

Chapter Five restores Euthydemus as Socrates' interlocutor and presents a variety of defenses of continence. Six defenses are offered. Continence is foundational for noble action; it is itself noble and grand; it is a means to the good, especially wisdom; it is itself the greatest good; it is a means to pleasure; and it is, again, foundational to noble action but also a means to the greatest of pleasures.

At the chapter's opening, Socrates is said to have held that "it is good for continence to be present in one who intends to do anything noble" (IV.5.1). Most obviously, this statement seems to mean that continence is necessary for going through with noble action; the noble things are difficult (II.1.28-29). This understanding of continence as foundational to virtue parallels Socrates' earlier exhortation that every man ought to believe "that continence is the foundation of virtue" and "be equipped with this first in his soul" (I.5.4). Both there and here, continence itself is neither noble nor virtuous but foundational, or a means, to nobility and virtue. Continence is "good" or among "the things useful for virtue" (IV.5.2); it is not itself virtue.

Euthydemus views freedom as a "noble and grand possession" (IV.5.2). The reason he views it as noble, according to Socrates, is his assumption that "it belongs to one who is free to do what is best" (IV.5.3). For Socrates, then, and perhaps in a way for

Euthydemus, freedom is not good or dignified in itself, but only when paired with prudence or wisdom. Freedom is only good when it leads to what is good; freedom – and perhaps also continence – is a conditional good. But Euthydemus in fact seems to view freedom as perfectly, necessarily, and definitionally good, like beauty, strength, riches, reputation, and law (IV.2.34, IV.2.14-18). Freedom is noble and grand; the incontinent lack freedom altogether; he may well see continence (being the opposite of incontinence, and a form of freedom) as noble and grand. Between Socrates' view that continence is useful or foundational to virtue, and Euthydemus' view that continence as freedom is itself noble and grand, a tension develops. It becomes clear that the hodgepodge of defenses of continence presented in this chapter may not merely supplement but may in fact contradict one another.

Socrates next defines continence as a means, not to what is noble but to what is good. Only the worst masters would "prevent what is best and compel what is worst" (IV.5.5). The incontinent, whose own wild desires are such mad masters, are enslaved in the worst slavery. But what is truly best, i.e. the greatest good from which they are prevented, turns out not to be noble action but wisdom (IV.5.6). Only because it interferes with philosophy is incontinence the worst slavery and, presumably, continence useful. And yet continence is not even mentioned here, but rather moderation. Moderation, it seems, is foundational for (or a means to) wisdom, the greatest good. But if the true opposite of incontinence is now said to be moderation, where does continence fall? Is it not even a means to the greatest good (wisdom), but rather a means to a *means* (moderation) to that good? If so, continence has been quickly and drastically devalued. Accordingly, Euthydemus' responses have become correspondingly subdued (IV.5.7).

Socrates attempts to reignite Euthydemus' enthusiasm for continence by convincing him that it is not a means (or a means to a means) to the greatest good, but rather itself the greatest good. To do this, he sets up a faulty analogy. The opposite of moderation (incontinence) is the cause of the worst things; therefore the opposite of incontinence (continence) must be the cause of the best things (IV.5.7-8). Two problems emerge here. First, Socrates makes a subtle shift, first claiming that incontinence's opposite is moderation, then claiming it is merely continence. But if continence is in fact somewhere *between* incontinence and moderation in value and dignity, then just because moderation leads to great goods, and incontinence to great evils, that does not mean that continence (like moderation) will lead to great goods.

Second, the analogy is faulty because Socrates assumes that the opposite of a thing which leads to a great harm must necessarily lead to a great good. But this is plainly false. Even if continence (rather than moderation) *were* the opposite of incontinence, and incontinence led to what is worst, it would not necessarily be true that continence would therefore lead to what is best. A regimen of cigarettes and junk food may lead to death, but that does not mean that a regimen of no cigarettes and no junk food will lead to immortality.[23] Socrates here finds it necessary for civic or rhetorical purposes to exalt continence unphilosophically; this may point to a necessary gap between the philosophic and the political views of continence, or, more generally, between philosophy and politics.

But this passage in fact points to a deeper problem. In discussing the benefits of true moderation, Socrates asks Euthydemus if he thinks "there is anything worse for a

[23] Though many seem to think it will; perhaps Socrates here uses and thus highlights that psychological quirk.

human being than what makes one choose the harmful in place of the beneficial and persuades one to attend to the former, while neglecting the latter, and compels one to do the opposite of what the moderate do?" (IV.5.7). Euthydemus *himself* answers that he thinks there is nothing worse than this. But could not that definition of what is worst, in opposition to what is moderate, be applied to noble action itself? If noble action is truly self-sacrificial, then moderation and perhaps also continence – far from being foundational or a means to noble action – may in fact be *opposed* to noble action. This would bring new meaning to the chapter's opening statement that Socrates held it "good for continence to be present in one who intends to/plans to (μέλλοντι) do anything noble" (IV.5.1). According to this argument, if the city or the gods in fact compel one truly to sacrifice one's own good and thus to do what is bad, then they themselves are the "worst masters" creating the "worst slavery" (IV.5.5).

Accordingly, Socrates tries to shore up Euthydemus' enthusiasm for conventional continence, rather than moderation – but he does so on strange grounds. Continence allows one to delay and thus to increase the force of pleasures, preventing both oversatiety and underappreciation (IV.5.9). Socrates thus defends continence as a means to prudent hedonism. But this defense seems to work too well. Euthydemus is enthusiastic (IV.5.9), and Socrates must realize that such a defense, because grounded in (and encouraging) hedonism, may unleash too many desires and require too much prudence to create a civically healthy mindset.

Therefore, Socrates launches his most conventional (and exalted) defense of continence yet. Once again he calls it foundational for noble action, but now he blurs its status: it may either be a means to noble action, or it may itself entail or provide nobility.

Having proven to himself that Euthydemus, though unphilosophic, contains within his soul a philosophic impulse (IV.5.7) – which may not be entirely civically healthy – Socrates now opens the floodgates of the conventional praise of continence. Now continence is associated with nobility, great political power, and the greatest hopes, including hopes for the greatest pleasures, to be obtained through noble rule. He even induces Euthydemus to think that continence is not merely necessary for these things but sufficient: "those who are continent enjoy the benefits that come from these things" (IV.5.10). This less philosophic praise of continence becomes necessary because Euthydemus is not philosophic and does not appreciate the earlier, and truer, praise of continence as necessary for the pursuit of wisdom. Continence must again be exalted, tethered to nobility and great hopes, in order to be attractive enough for healthy political life; it must itself be seen as noble and virtuous, not as merely a means (cf. *Laws* 626e). Through this experiment, Socrates once again shows, simultaneously, the necessary gap between philosophy and politics, and the (therefore dangerous) philosophic impulse within the ordinary citizen.

Lawfulness (4.6)

Xenophon begins Chapter Six by saying that he will now "*attempt* to tell also how [Socrates] also made his companions more skilled at conversing" (4.6.1). At the end of the previous chapter, Xenophon had mentioned the activity of separating out, through collective deliberation, "the matters of practical concern (τά πράγματα) according to class" – which Socrates held to be good for all men (IV.5.12). But now the focus shifts toward examining "what each of the beings (τό ὄντα) is" – which Socrates himself never stopped doing with his companions (IV.6.1). We seem to be moving into more strictly philosophic territory; if there is in fact a tension between philosophy and politics, rhetoric may become even more necessary.

Accordingly, Xenophon feigns laziness to excuse himself from "go[ing] through all things as [Socrates] defined them;" that would be a lot of work! (IV.6.1). But he will tell some in which "his manner of examination," if not the implications of his examination, will be clear.

This chapter as a whole may be divided into four sections. The first three sections are a single conversation with Euthydemus: first, a discussion of piety, nobility, justice, and wisdom (IV.6.2-7); centrally, a discussion of the good and the noble (8-9); and third, a discussion of courage (10-11). A short narrative section then describes the way Socrates

defined different types of rule (12). A final narrative section, which includes an embedded dialogue with an unnamed interlocutor, describes Socrates' manner of teaching or speaking (13-15).

It becomes apparent that the plan of this chapter was in fact revealed by Xenophon's list of 'What is?' questions in Chapter One of Book I. After describing Socrates' chastisement of those who investigate the divine things, Xenophon wrote: "These, then, are the sorts of things he said concerning those who involved themselves in such matters. But he himself was always conversing about human things—examining what is pious, what is impious, what is noble, what is shameful, what is just, what is unjust, what is moderation, what is madness, what is courage, what is cowardice, what is a city, what is a statesman, what is rule over human beings, what is a skilled ruler over human beings, as well as about the other things…" (I.1.16). This chapter follows the order of topics set forth in that list; the few deviations from that plan, and the implications of those deviations, must be investigated as they arise.

Piety, Nobility, and Justice

First, Xenophon's Socrates investigates piety. This question is somehow primary or even foundational; it takes precedence over – for it may affect – the investigation into all others.

Socrates begins by asking Euthydemus what sort of thing piety is, skipping its definition. Euthydemus responds that piety is "the noblest sort, by Zeus" (IV.6.2).[24]

[24] Freedom, he had said earlier, was a possession "as noble and grand as can be" (IV.5.2).

Again skirting the definition of piety itself, Socrates asks if Euthydemus is able to say "what sort of person the pious one is." Euthydemus responds that the pious person is "one who honors the gods." Socrates asks him if there is a certain way one should honor the gods to be considered pious; Euthydemus explains that one must honor the gods lawfully.

Euthydemus then agrees that if one knows the laws, one knows how one should honor the gods (IV.6.3). Implicit in this agreement – that what the laws prescribe is what one *should* do – is the idea that law, to deserve the name law, must be good. Goodness, in other words, is an essential or definitional trait of law. Many times throughout the *Memorabilia*, Socrates has called attention to a striking linguistic, or rather psychological, phenomenon. Certain words have goodness as a definitional attribute. Work (I.2.57), leisure (III.10.9), feasting (III.14.7), wealth (IV.2.37, cf. *Republic* 559c), and freedom (IV.5.3) were shown to be words of this kind. The fact that these words had goodness as a definitional attribute enabled Socrates, in several cases, to redefine them in accordance with what is actually good. For instance, with feasting, "he said also that 'to feast' (εὐωχεῖσθαι) was called eating (ἐσθίειν) in the Athenian tongue. He said that the 'well' (εὖ) was added with a view to eating those things that pain neither the soul nor the body and are not difficult to find. As a result he attributed feasting, too, to those who live with a moderate/orderly way of life" (III.14.7). In other words, if feasting in the conventional and opulent sense is not in fact good, true feasting must mean something more minimal; the goodness is more essential than the opulence. By using the goodness inherent within the concept of feasting, Socrates was able to twist it away from its normal meaning and toward something much more moderate. Goodness may in fact be more essential to certain words' definitions than any other aspect of them.

Law, according to Euthydemus, seems to be a word with goodness as a definitional trait. A law which advises one to do what one should not in fact do, or what is not in fact good, is not truly a law (cf. I.2.42 and *Greater Hippias* 284d-e).

Because law is good, if one knows the laws regarding honoring the gods, one knows how one should honor the gods. Next, Socrates gains Euthydemus' assent that one who *knows* how one should honor the gods *thinks* that one should honor the gods in this way. Having established that solid link between knowing something to be good and thinking it to be good, Socrates asks whether anyone honors gods "in a way other than as he thinks one should?" Euthydemus does not think so. Two steps are taken here; Socrates makes a solid link between *thinking* that *one* should honor the gods in the way the laws prescribe, and *doing* such honoring *oneself*. In other words, he moves from thought to action, establishing a solid link between thinking something is good and attempting to do that thing. Simultaneously, he moves from the general to the personal, establishing a solid and syllogistic link between thinking something is good in the abstract, or for all human beings, and thinking it good for oneself.

Having established solid links between knowing what is lawful, knowing one should do what is lawful, thinking one should do what is lawful, and personally doing what is lawful, Socrates connects the first item to the last: the knower of what is lawful will do what is lawful, i.e. he will honor the gods lawfully (IV.6.4). Euthydemus emphatically agrees. Socrates then re-establishes the originally agreed-upon links between honoring the gods lawfully and honoring as one should, and between honoring as one should and being pious. If those three items are effectively equivalent, and knowing what is lawful is equivalent to (or necessarily leads to) honoring the gods

lawfully, then all that remains is for Socrates to connect the entire chain, whose links have all been forged: "then the one who knows what is lawful concerning the gods would correctly be defined by us as pious" (IV.6.4). Euthydemus agrees. But if knowing what is lawful concerning the gods is equivalent to being pious, how can knowing (and thus culpable) impiety exist? If piety is knowledge, how is impiety deservedly punished?

Accordingly (ἆρα), Socrates immediately asks, moving into a discussion of nobility and justice, "is it permitted to deal with human beings in any manner someone may wish?" (IV.6.5). Euthydemus denies this. He himself applies their formula regarding the pious to those who are lawful with human beings: "also regarding these, the one who knows what is lawful—in accordance with which people should deal with one another—would be lawful" (IV.6.5). He agrees that lawfulness is equivalent to knowledge. The unphilosophic Euthydemus has again tested positive for an inclination to accept the philosophic outlook.

Socrates asks whether those who deal with one another lawfully, deal with one another as one should. Because law is definitionally good, Euthydemus agrees. "Accordingly," Socrates asks, "do those who deal with human beings as one should, deal with them nobly?" Euthydemus emphatically agrees. Not only the lawful but the noble, it seems, is good or choiceworthy by definition. The noble is in its very essence something which one ought to do. Socrates next asks, "Do those who deal with human beings nobly engage nobly in human affairs?" Euthydemus, perhaps less committed to entering politics by the time of this conversation, merely says that this is "plausible."

Here Socrates makes a surprising shift. He does not, as he did with the pious, connect all the links of his argument. One would expect him to connect the knowledge of

what is lawful regarding human beings to the noble engagement in human affairs, thus solidifying and demonstrating the links between these things. Instead, he shifts to a discussion of justice. Perhaps this shift indicates that, according to the philosophic perspective, knowing what is lawful regarding human beings is not in fact equivalent to political engagement because wisdom does not point to political activity (cf. *Republic* 347c). Or, perhaps Socrates moves quickly from the noble to the just because he sees the just as more fundamental; perhaps the noble receives its character from what is politically just.

"Those who are obedient to the laws" do what is just, according to Socrates and then Euthydemus, who adds that the things called just are "the things that the laws bid." He may have learned this from Socrates' conversation with Hippias in Chapter Four. One who does what the laws bid does "both what is just and what one should" (IV.6.6).

A slight terminological shift has occurred in this section on justice. In discussing the pious and the noble, Socrates had spoken of *being lawful* (νομίμως, νόμιμα: IV.6.4-5). But upon transitioning to justice, he begins to speak of *obeying* the laws (τοῖς νόμοις πειθόμενοι: IV.6.5). This is perhaps indicative of a shift away from the unwritten laws and toward the political laws. But this would imply that nobility, which in fact retains the language of piety and unwritten law, has something in common not only with justice but with piety. By sandwiching the noble between the pious and the just, as a kind of transitional concept, Socrates perhaps indicates that nobility is in a sense halfway between piety and justice, or receives its character from each. The noble man understands himself to be acting neither simply for political reasons nor simply for the gods – yet his desire for the noble may spring from both justice and piety, and may retain its roots in each. He may

attempt to carry out an action which can be exalted without explicit reference to gods or human beings, or to the good of any particular being. By making the discussion of the noble transitional and very brief, Xenophon would seem to indicate that the noble is not foundational, but rather a vaguer synthesis of – or superstructure built upon, yet never quite transcending – the just and the pious. The noble would be, in a way, a pinnacle, whose vagueness might in certain settings render it more durable than either of its roots.

Socrates next applies the argument about piety as lawfulness to justice. Strikingly, both the just and the pious (from which the noble emerges) seem to be subsets of the broader concept of lawfulness. Lawfulness, then, is foundational: piety is lawfulness in interactions with the gods, whereas justice is lawfulness in interactions with other human beings. Applying his earlier method now to justice, Socrates forms solid links between knowing one should be lawful and thinking one should be lawful, and between thinking one should be lawful and doing what is lawful. To know the lawful is to do what is just; the doers of justice are just; the just are defined as the knowers of what is lawful (IV.6.6).

If piety, nobility, and justice are all subsets of lawfulness, all three will display the theoretical tension within law. Law is, in its essence, both deservedly punitive and good for the lawful. Because lawfulness is good for the lawful, all knowers of the law will be lawful. Those who are not lawful could not have been knowers of the law. Thus they could not have been culpable. Thus law cannot reasonably be deservedly punitive.

Because piety, nobility, and justice have come to be equated with knowledge, Socrates next turns to wisdom. He establishes that the wise are wise due to understanding, and that understanding/scientific knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) *is* wisdom (IV.6.7). An understanding attained through revelation is not mentioned here. But Socrates has a

message of moderation for the philosophic or scientific as well, given that human beings "may not be able to understand all of the beings" (IV.6.7).

The Good

Socrates next leads Euthydemus to grant that the same thing is not beneficial for all; "what is beneficial to one is sometimes harmful to another" (IV.6.8, cf. *Statesman* 294b). Law, however, is in its essence both good in every case and general. If Euthydemus believes that what is general cannot in every case be good, he holds the impious position that law is not a being. Or, he holds that although law is not knowable (or intelligibly good) it is still noble to obey law, despite or even because of that unknowability. Law may be unknowable or bad for us, yet it must be followed. Perhaps this is why Socrates mentioned that knowing what the laws bid is essential to obeying the laws in the section on justice, but not in the section on piety (IV.6.6, cf. I.2.41). Law would then be noble for all, though of unknowable goodness in particular cases or for particular human beings.

We are surprised to discover that Xenophon here seems to deviate from the plan of topics outlined in Book I. Instead of discussing moderation and madness, he discusses the good and the noble. With that substitution in mind, Socrates next obtains Euthydemus' enthusiastic endorsement of the claim that a thing cannot be "noble for everything." For a thing to be noble, according to Euthydemus, it must be beneficial or useful for something or someone.

Courage

Euthydemus holds that courage is "very noble indeed" (IV.6.10). Because the noble has now been associated or equated with the useful (IV.6.9), Euthydemus agrees that courage, if noble, is also useful. It is not his opinion that it is useful to be ignorant of "the terrible and risky things" (IV.6.10). Whose use, and whose ignorance, are left unclear. Might not the city at times find even ignorance in the citizens useful, and label that courage? But Euthydemus denies that ignorance can be courage. Neither can a fear of "things that are not terrible" (IV.6.10, cf. *Laws* 646e-647a and Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1115a8-11 on fear and shame).

Those who are good regarding the terrible and risky things are courageous (IV.6.10). Socrates does not yet clarify whose good is at issue. Those who are good regarding such things necessarily deal with them nobly. Those who deal with them badly are bad (IV.6.11). Surprisingly, Socrates does mention those who deal with such things shamefully.

Socrates next forges solid links between knowledge and the virtue of courage. Because courage is a "very noble" thing, and nobility is a subset or emanation of (piety and) justice, which in turn are subsets of lawfulness, courage is susceptible to the same method as were the other lawful things. Those who think something ought to be done, do that thing. Those unable to do what is courageous must have lacked knowledge of how to deal with the terrible and risky things. Euthydemus is hesitant to agree with that claim (IV.6.11); the Socratic interpretation of courage, it seems, is more difficult to accept than the Socratic interpretation of justice, nobility, and piety (cf. *Protagoras* 360d). But

Euthydemus agrees that only those with knowledge of how to deal with the terrible things will be able to deal with them as one should (IV.6.11). He also agrees that those who are not mistaken will do well, and finally – becoming more confident – that those who are cowardly are mistaken. Socrates summarizes: "Those who understand how nobly to deal with the terrible and risky things are courageous, then, and those who are mistaken about this are cowardly." Euthydemus responds: "They are, at least in my opinion" (IV.6.11).

The philosophic investigation of lawfulness and its subsets, then, discovers a closed chain of necessity between knowledge, thought, action, and being — that is, between knowledge about what is good, thoughts about what is good, actions emerging from those opinions, and one's essence or virtue. If there are solid links between each of these items, then virtue is knowledge and retributive punishment irrational. Whether political virtue can truly be understood in these terms remains an open question. But Socrates discovered, even in an average youth who held freedom to be the noblest and grandest possession (IV.5.3), an inclination to accept the philosophic perspective.

The Re-embrace of Law

Precisely because of that discovery, Xenophon immediately ends the depiction of Socrates' conversation with Euthydemus and abruptly explains the Socratic re-embrace of law and lawful rule. All theoretical qualms disappear. At a practical level, it is important that kingship and tyranny be differentiated (IV.6.12, cf. *Statesman* 301c). Now there is no mention of the idea that the ruling virtue, or knowledge, would be the only

legitimate claim to rule. The re-embrace of the lawful in fact means that, at least on a political level, virtue cannot be understood as knowledge.

After proving to himself that the unphilosophic soul of Euthydemus has a natural inclination toward accepting the philosophic outlook, then, Socrates re-embraces lawfulness. It is precisely the fact that "all men by nature desire to know" (Aris. *Metaphysics* 980c) – paired with the necessary gap between philosophy and healthy political life – that makes law and lawfulness so necessary. The ancients' preference for reverence, as opposed to the moderns' preference for enlightenment, may paradoxically be explained by the ancients' greater emphasis on the natural ubiquity of the desire to know.

Deviating again from his plan of topics, Xenophon does not discuss "what is a city, what is a statesman." Instead, he skips to a discussion of "what is rule over human beings." For the promised discussion of "what is a skilled ruler over human beings," he substitutes a discussion of Socrates' own method of teaching and speaking. Socrates employed rhetoric carefully, in order to draw the half-philosophic yet confused back toward a civically healthy mindset that emphasizes deeds, work, war, and concord (IV.6.13-14), and in order to "lead his arguments through the opinions of human beings" (IV.6.15). It seems that Socrates himself, and perhaps no other man, is Xenophon's paragon of a skilled ruler of human beings.

Conclusion: Religion and Politics Through Socrates' Eyes

> *"Don't you see that the most ancient and the wisest of human things—cities and nations—are the most pious toward the gods, and that the most sensible ages in life are the most attentive to the gods?" (I.4.16)*

Books III and IV of the *Memorabilia* show us that and how, according to Xenophon's Socrates, politics is fundamentally religious, and religion fundamentally political. Politics is fundamentally religious in that it must lean upon an exalted vision of the fatherland to encourage just rule and loyal sacrifice, as well as upon providential gods to support lawfulness in each of its forms, including the form of courage. The basic grounding norms of healthy family and social life, and respect for lawfulness itself, are rendered far more stable when enforced not merely by a given regime but rather at a trans-political level. To combine robustness and vitality in the citizenry, on the one hand, with stable and peaceful family and political life—to walk the political tightrope between confidence and fear—requires, according to the Socratic understanding, providential gods and the hopes they render reasonable. A fearful or dispirited citizenry is unhealthy, whereas a lawlessly confident citizenry may require despotic political control to restrain. Unwritten or divine laws, once internalized, may feel far less oppressive. We are inclined, by nature, to be lawful beings.

Religion, on the other hand, is fundamentally political, according to Socrates, because piety has its root in the broader concept of lawfulness, which is itself political

and contains the virtue of justice. The gods are not only political lawgivers but, if understood to be providential rulers, may be implicated in the theoretical and practical problems of human rule. If so, Xenophon's typology of rule, as presented in Book III, might have implications beyond the human realm. It may, in other words, have implications for the one 'what is' question that Xenophon never explicitly raises: What is a god?

References

Strauss, Leo. *Xenophon's Socrates*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972.

Xenophon. *Memorabilia.* (Trans: Bonnette, Amy L.) Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994.

Xenophon. *Memorabilia, Oeconomicus, Symposium, Apology*. Loeb edition. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.